

VI.
THE
Scandal and Folly
OF THE
CROSS
REMOVED:
OR, THE
Wisdom of GOD's Method of the Gospel,
IN THE
Death of JESUS CHRIST,
MANIFESTED, and JUSTIFIED,
AGAINST THE
DEISTS.

I COR. I. 23, 24.

But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a Stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks Foolishness: But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God.

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THE PREFACE.

CRedulity and Scepticism, are two dangerous Shelves, which it concerns all Rational Men equally to decline : The first of these is the Origine of Superstition, and main prop of Error ; and the second is the cause of Irreligion and Impiety. To shun both these Extremes, we must found our Belief on a sure bottom, and take care that our Doubts do not exceed the Limits of Prudence. We must always observe to put a difference betwixt the Doctrines delivered to us from God, and Humane Institutions, and suspend our Judgment till we clearly understand the Truth of the Matter.

There are some, that at this time call in question the truth of the Christian Religion, that they may appear the only Wits, before they know God's design in the Revelation, or the true Fundamental Doctrines of it. They weigh the Holy Scripture in a false Balance, not by it self, but by the jarring Opinions of several Christians they converse with. They carelessly overlook the great Truths the Gospel teaches us, viz. That there is a God, and an Eternal Life, Ratified and Confirmed by the Death and Resurrection of Christ ; and that we must be entirely good Men, if we ever hope to be partakers of it. But they judge of it by other Doctrines, grounded upon figurative Expressions, which may admit another Sense not at all repugnant to the Fundamental Articles it teaches in words, whose meaning is indisputable.

If before they set themselves to doubt of this, they had but acquainted themselves, as easily they might, that Revelation was proposed to no other end, than to give sufficient proofs of an eternal Life, and examin'd the strength of these proofs, they had discover'd so much Wisdom in the contrivance and achievement of this design, that it would cost them some time to consider what Party to adhere to, before they had concluded to discard it.

We have done our best Endeavours to give just Ideas of the Death of Christ, to prevent many from so precipitate a Judgment in a business of so great Importance ; and to induce others to forsake their Prejudices.

I have advanced nothing but upon Scripture proofs, to shew, That the Christ's Death be a Scandal to some, and Folly to others; yet for all that, it was the main Design of God, or rather his great Master-piece.

The most considerable Texts, which mention the Death of Christ are here explained. If any one dispute the meaning we have given to any of them, we are ready, with all Meekness and Candour, to give our Reasons of it. We have hinted at those Reasons in some places but slightly, because so exact a discussion had carried us too far, had interrupted the Chain of our Discourse, and hinder'd us of our aim, which was, in few words, to give the Deists, who trouble not their heads with the Disputes amongst us Christians, clear Notions of Christ's Death.

We are very confident, we have laid down nothing in this whole Treatise, but what answers to God's great Design in the Revelation, and what engages us in Piety; by which two marks, one may certainly judge of the Truth of a Doctrine. If God chiefly design'd to give us undeniable proofs of another Life, to make us Good, and Vertuous, to the end we may attain that Happiness, we must necessarily own that Christ's Death being God's great Design, it ought not to miss of these Ends; and consequently, the Method we have taken to Explain it, is the best, since it maintains God's great Purpose, and is a valid Proof of the Christian Religion, and a powerful Excitement to the Practice of Vertue.

The Notion we have given of this Death, considered as a Sacrifice, hath this remarkable in it, That tho' it opposes the commonly received Opinion of many Christians, yet it does not at all lessen the value of Christ's Blood: On the contrary, it vindicates God's Wisdom, in the permitting of it to be spill'd, takes away from Sinners all Security, and removes all the great Abuses, which Mens Avarice hath introduced into Religion by this means.

We have taken some pains in Answering the Objections of the Deists, because that was the sole Design of this Treatise. We begun it by giving a clear Notion of Christ's Death; for this seems more Natural, in order to the marring all the Illusions which Men could frame, to shew the strength of the Proof of Christ's Martyrdom.

If the Death of the Messiah be the Effect of an Infinite Wisdom, 'tis not to be denied, that the right understanding of it, is one of the best, of the more perfect and most necessary of all Knowledge; 'tis richly worth a Man's while, to Employ all his Care to know God, in the full Extent of his Perfections. Since God hath given so fair a Representation of himself, 'tis unreasonable to withdraw our Eyes from so Blessed a Vision. If God, through great Tenderness and Clemency, hath done more for us than could be expected of him, as to manifest himself in so wonderful a manner, the least Gratitude we can shew, is to bestow some few moments on the due Consideration of this great Design; for we shall be inexcusable, if spending so much time in trivial Employments, we neglect to bestow a few Hours in such an Important one.

We know the Cross of Christ deter's Men, who only please themselves with curious and profound Sciences. 'Tis true indeed, at the first sight, it presents us with a Crucify'd Man, dealt with as the worst of Slaves; but let us draw back the Curtain, and dive into the Reasons of Christ's Death, and

we shall soon be convinc'd, that God made it so surprising and strange, to excite us to a more earnest scrutiny of his Design, that we may the better discover the Greatness and Wisdom of it.

The most part of Men have imbibed many Prejudices, and for that reason oppos'd the Truth; the simple and natural way, we have taken to treat of so high a subject, may, perhaps, contribute to make it known, and render Men Lovers of it. If all Men would agree to this Truth, That God hath propos'd nothing necessary to Salvation beyond the Capacity of their Understanding, and Revealed himself that we might understand him, perhaps they would Examine Religion themselves, and not take it upon Trust; and after their due Examination, they would conceive more Zeal for the Truth, and greater Love for God, when they consider that he hath Revealed nothing, but what is most consonant to Reason, and also most worthy of the most perfect Being.

These are things of which we have offer'd sufficient Proofs to the Deists, who pretending to solid Reason, and to be disengag'd from any particular System, we hope they will Examine the Christian Religion, as we have presented it to their view, and agree it contains nothing, but what is highly reasonable.

If we have not the Happiness to persuade them, yet this will be a great Satisfaction to us, that we have endeavour'd for God's Glory, to make known his Design with all the clearness and simplicity we were capable of.

I beg of all Christians, who have other thoughts of Christ's Death, they would consider, that the only design of this Treatise, is to advance God's Glory, to clear the Truth, and procure the Salvation of all Men; that seeing our good intention, they may not be scandaliz'd at first, if they meet with some Notions disagreeing from their own, but put on Charity worthy of the Disciples of Christ, and the best help in the Examination, and searching out the Truth, which oftentimes blind Zeal, and ungovern'd Passion, hinder us from discovering.

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THE

THE
SCANDAL and FOLLY
OF THE
CROSS
REMOVED.

CHAP. I.

Of the Cause of the Unbelief of the Deists.

TIS a very surprizing thing, that the *Christian Religion*, which may very well be call'd God's Master-piece, should be to this Day the Stumbling-Block of the *Jews*, and the Scorn of other Unbelievers. When we see Christ's Doctrine flying like Lightening from East to West, destroying the Heathen Idols, and Converting a great part of the World, we cannot but admire the extent, and swiftness of its Conquests, and confess this is God's doing. But when we consider what is acted in these our Times, the small progress of the Gospel, I will not say among Infidels, but in *Christendom* it self, 'tis beyond all wonder that its Doctrine, which carries with it so many proofs of its Truth, should be call'd in question by some, and that its Laws, which are so Holy, should be openly transgress'd by others.

'Tis not very difficult to find out the Cause of Vice: Let a Man but examine his own Heart, and he will soon discover it. But 'tis not so easie to know the source of Unbelief; for the finding of it out requires not only Time, Learning, and Thinking, but a solid Judgment too. Many relying upon the great share of Wit, they pretend to above others, dis-believe the Gospel to day, the verity of which perhaps they may be convinc'd of to morrow, if it be set out before them in all its naked simplicity: Since their want of Faith proceeds either from some contradiction, which they find in a Doctrine they imagine contain'd in it, or from some false Explications of some fundamental Article, which, as dark Clouds, keep from them the clearest light of the Sun of Righteousness.

BUT:

But what pretence soever Men may make for their Unbelief, yet God's Providence is to be admir'd in this, which may take off many Prejudices some have against Christian Religion, That there is no Christian Society, which refuses to subscribe to the *Apostles Creed*. Christians are divided among themselves in most other things: Their Divines pretending to express matters of Religion better than God himself, and more clearly than Christ the Author of it, have not only ascribed to their Decisions the same Authority they give to the Scripture, but are gone so far as to use violent means, when persuasion will not do. Had Christians kept close to their first Creed, we had never heard of those Disputes and Divisions among them, which one cannot see but with an extream grief. While they wrangle one with another, Charity, the Essence of Christianity, is lost; and God being angry with the boldness of Men, leaves them to the imagination of their hearts. So they come to forget Christ's Doctrine, and hold in its stead Mens Conceits; which are the cause of the *Deists* unbelief.

Let the Gospel be set forth in its first simplicity, and with the same purity it had proceeding from its Author's mouth, and it will soon make its first progress, and triumph easily over all the doubts, which men raise against its Doctrine. Truth being once restor'd to Men, Charity, its faithful Companion, shall rule, as it did, over their hearts, and shall adorn the Church with the same Mark, or Livery, by which Christ's Disciples were first known.

The greatest part of Men, for all the Prejudices they bring from their Childhood, know very well, when they come to the use of Reason, both the weakness, and absurdities of the Doctrine taught them: Reason, being consulted, gets the upper-hand, it often discerns Falshood, tho' for want of means it cannot find out, or discern Truth.

The most part of Men of Wit in *Italy* are *Deists*, because knowing no other Christian Religion, but that of their Church, they easily apprehend the absurdity of it. I could heartily wish that the false prospect, in which the Death of our Saviour was presented among us, had not produc'd so many such.

'Tis a most deplorable thing, to see the death of the Saviour of the World, which is one of the greatest proofs of the Christian Religion, made by the *Deists* an objection against it; and one of the strongest props of the Gospel, become one of the causes of its decay. This great event, in which God's Wildom and Goodness are to be seen in all their splendor, when beheld in its true light, offers nothing to their eyes but Cruelty and Injustice, because it is set before them in a false light.

When Christians, in order to give an Account of this Death, bring in the Necessity of God's Justice being satisfied, the *Deist* presently upbraid them with making God thirsting after Blood, and changing his Nature. They tell them, that instead of a most merciful Being, they make of him an inexorable Judge, armed with an avenging Justice, whose revenge nothing but blood could satisfy. There is no wonder, say they, that having naturally the Notion of a most perfect Being, we reject Revelation, which describes him as a merciless Deity, and consequently becreav'd of the greatest of his Perfections.

I own, that many Christians having mis-apprehended the matter, and stretch'd it beyond its true intear, have given too much occasion to the *Deists* objection : But they must own too, that God's astonishing way of saving Mankind, brought insensibly Christians to this opinion. They could not see the Son of God dying such a cruel Death, without believing God's Justice required absolutely that satisfaction ; and thinking that God, being as good as he is, had never proceeded to such an extremity, could he have forgiven sins without the spilling of that most precious Blood.

These considerations so far prevail'd with them, as to keep them from reflecting upon the sad consequences, which may be deduced from their opinion. They did not mind that the Doctrine of the absolute necessity of satisfaction ties the hands of God, hinders him from making use of his Right, and robs him of the glory he receives in shewing mercy. They mistook his Nature, by making natural to him Avenging Justice, which he declares expressly by the Prophet * *Isaiah*, to be inconsistent with his Attributes, to be a strange work to him. * *Isa. 28. 21.*
 † *I have no pleasure, saith he, in the death of him that dieth.* They are gone † *Ezek. 18.*
 so far as to give him the lie to his face, when they hold that he cannot forgive sins without such satisfaction, tho' he expressly declares the contrary. || *I am* || *Isa. 43. 25.*
be that blotsteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake. And what is more, they quite set aside his Wisdom, in the dispensation of the Gospel, as the great Dr. *Sherlock* hath very well observed. * *If Justice*, says he, *be so natural to God, that nothing could satisfy him but the death of his own Son, the Redemption of the World by Christ may discover his Justice or his Goodness, but not his Wisdom ; for Wisdom consists in the choice of the best and fittest means to attain an end, when there are more ways than one of doing it. But it requires no great Wisdom to chuse, when there is but one possible way.* * *Treat. of the Knowl. of Christ, p. 34.*

To avoid these consequences, the most skilful Protestants, as *Episcopius*, *Courcelleus*, and *Limborch*, and the Learnedest of our Doctors, have rejected that Opinion, which gives such a notion of Justice as is perfectly new, and which does so much wrong to the Wisdom of God. † *All Mankind*, says Dr. *Sherlock*, † *Ibid. p. 31.*
have accounted it an Act of Goodness (without the least suspicion of Injustice in it) to remit Injuries and Offences, without exacting any punishment : And that he is so far from being Just, that he is Cruel and Savage, who will remit no Offence, till he hath satisfied his Revenge. He puts afterwards his Adversary in mind, that it follows from his Doctrine, || *That he would not believe God himself, tho' he* || *Ibid. p. 33.*
should make never so many promises of being good and gracious to Sinners, unless he were sure that he had first satisfied his Revenge. He goes so far, as to charge him with having the same Notion of God which Men have of the Devil. The Sum of your Doctrine is, That God is all Love and Patience, when he hath taken his fill of Revenge ; as others use to say, That the Devil is very good when he is pleased.

The most judicious Dr. *Tillotson*, our late Archbishop, says positively, * *That God could have pardoned Sin without satisfaction made to his Justice, either by the Suffering of the Sinner himself, or of a Sacrifice in his stead.* * *Serm. concerning the Sacrament of Satisfaction, p. 11.*

Indeed 'tis hard to conceive that Clemency should be a fault in God, while it makes Men the objects of our Love. Clemency, I say, which is one of God's greatest

³ *Mat. 5. 48.* greatest Perfections, which Christ exhorts us to imitate above all things. * *Be ye perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect, for he makes his Sun to rise on the evil and on the good, &c.* If it be one of the most noble perfections of God to do good to impenitent Sinners, how can the exercise of his Mercy towards a penitent Creature be against his nature?

49.

A *Deist* will say to me in this place, Your free Confession furnishes me with a stronger reason to reject Revelation, than that I drew from the common Opinion of Christians; for if Christ's Death were not necessary to satisfy God's Justice, if God could find out in his Wisdom another way to save Mankind, why did he expose to Death a Just Man? Were it not a great deal better to let all the wicked perish, than to make the most innocent of all Creatures suffer in so cruel a manner? Can such dealings agree with the Notion you your self give of a Good, Just, and Wise God? If God out of his Goodness, does good to a Sinner, can one conceive that he would hurt an innocent Person? If his Justice makes him render to every one his due, why does he not punish the Wicked without meddling with the Just? And if he could have found out in his Wisdom another way to save Mankind, why, without being forc'd to it, did he give up to a most painful Death, Innocence, or rather Vertue it self? Solve these difficulties, and shew me that Christ's Death hath nothing in it, but what is most agreeable with solid Reason, and the notion we have of the most perfect Being, if you will have me to be a Christian.

Before we answer directly this Objection, which is one of the great obstacles which deters Men from the Christian Religion, the Cross being a Stumbling-Block to some, and Foolishness to others; 'tis very necessary to inquire narrowly into this matter, and show that Christ's Death, tho' surprizing at the first sight, is managed for all that by an admirable Providence, which ought to convince all considering Men, that God alone, out of love, could be the Author of such a design, and that none else but he could compass it with so much Wisdom.

CH A P. II.

Of the great design of God in the Revelation of the Gospel.

IT will be easie to convince Men of the great Truth set down in the end of the foregoing Chapter, if they would be at the pains to inquire into the great Reasons of God in Christ's Death, by following only the notions which the Scripture gives us of it. To show the strength of these Reasons, I shall explain in few words God's design in the Gospel-dispensation.

Man having made himself liable to Death through his sinful Disobedience, God moved with the sight of his misery, form'd a design very worthy of his Goodness. He resolv'd to set before them another Life, which would be not only free from the miseries of this World, but furnished besides with every thing that might render an Intelligent and Rational Being happy, and would be obtain'd upon such easie terms as might restore the knowledge of God among Men, and make Piety flourish upon Earth again.

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There is no body but he must agree with us, that this Design hath nothing in it, but what is most great, and worthy of the most perfect Being. Nothing clashes here with any of his Perfections, but all things give us the highest thoughts one can have of God. His Goodness is to be seen here in the Supreme degree, as well as the greatness of his Power in the Promise of a Resurrection, by which he designs to make all Men happy : His Wisdom and his Holiness shine forth too in the glorious means he uses, both to compass his design, and to reform Mankind.

God having first form'd this great Design in himself, the next thing to be done, was to make it known in such a manner, as should convince any rational Man that this great Promise proceeded from him. Soon after the Fall, he Promises a Redeemer, who should come to reveal to all Men that glorious Immortality. After his promise, he stays above four thousand Years before the fulfilling of it, that Men, after such a long expectation, should look for something extraordinary and great, and understand that God was to show forth in Christ, whatever his Love and Wisdom could suggest to him for the good of his Creatures.

But for fear the Promise of a Redeemer should be forgotten in so long a time, and that the Messiah should not be known at his coming, God took a special care to prevent it, by often renewing his Promise, and chusing a People which he separated for a while from all the rest of the World, to the intent that Christ might be born among them. He made Abraham go from Chaldaea to Canaan, and gave him a Son miraculously with this firm Promise, That from his Posterity should come the Saviour of the World. Out of the Sons of Isaac he chose Jacob against Esau his elder Brother's pretensions, that this distinction should make him to retain a more lively hope of that Redeemer. Out of the Sons of Jacob he chose Judah. Out of the Sons of Judah he sets up David's Family upon the Throne, that the Messiah, coming from the Royal Blood, should be the more easily known by reason of the great care that would be taken to preserve the Genealogy of the Royal Family. Hence it is that God suffer'd, but for a little while, the Tribe of Judah's Captivity, while he left the ten others in their dispersion. But what is more, God, by Daniel, declares expressly, the time of his coming ; by Micah, the place of his Birth ; and by the other Prophets, all the Marks or Characters which were to be in the Messiah, that all being found in Jesus, should be a more strong proof of his Mission.

The time allotted by God's Oracles being expired, the Messiah was born at Bethlehem, the place foretold, of the Family of David, of a Virgin ; that the novelty of this Birth might show, that he, who was born in such an extraordinary manner, whom God himself had generated in the chaste Womb of a Maid, was that Son of God, that promised Redeemer, which was in the Father's bosom, as speaks St. John ; that is perfectly instructed in God's mind, acquainted with his most secret thoughts, and reveal'd to Mankind the great design of God to make them happy, and the way how to obtain that happiness.

Our Saviour doth not confine his Promises within the narrow limits of this World ; this Life is too short to make us happy ; but he makes us hope for all in Heaven, in which place the fear of losing our happiness shall not disturb us in the enjoyment of it. He tells us, That God hath appointed a Day to raise all

Men, and make them appear before his Judgment-Seat ; upon which the Son should sit himself, to make every one give an Account of his Works, all the Angels of God being round about him : And that after this Account, he shall Sentence them all, giving to some an immortal and glorious Life, and condemning others to an eternal and shameful Death. He propounds to them all, the ways how to avoid this Death, and enjoy that Life, upon very easie Terms ; provided they will believe, that he came from God to make known that Great Design, and do what he commands ; that is, be holy, just, and charitable.

This is the great Aim of Revelation, and the great Contents of Christ's Commission ; God's Glory, and all Man's Interest lying here at stake, God hath done whatever could be thought of, to convince Mankind of the Truth revealed by Christ.

Let any one make as narrow enquiry as possible, to find out some other way to certifie Posterity of the Truth of some remarkable Event, we challenge all the Wit of Men, to propose other Means more likely to give us stronger Proofs, and greater Certainty, than the Proofs contained in the Gospel.

Our Saviour's Revelation was of too great moment to be believ'd upon his own Word ; he knew himself the Insufficiency of his own Testimony alone, * *If I bear Witness of my self, my Witness is not true.* This is the Reason, why he tells the *Jews*, who did refuse to believe in him, that besides the Testimony of *John* the Baptist, and his own, which by the Law of *Moses* were sufficient to testify a thing, he had yet a greater Proof of his Mission : † *For the Works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same Works that I do, bear Witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.* The great Sanhedrin, notwithstanding their Malice, knew well all the strength of this Proof : ‖ *This Man, say they, doeth many Miracles ; if we let him shew alone, all Men will believe in him.* Can one see the Lame walk, the Dumb speak, the Blind recover their sight, and the Dead themselves raised, without being convinced that the Worker of such Miracles comes from God ?

Man feels his own Weakness, and knows how far his Power can reach ; the sight of a Miracle surprises him, and makes him look for the Author of it elsewhere than upon Earth ; he goes directly to God, and deduces this wise Conclusion, That he that works the Miracle comes from him : For there is no likelihood, God would set his Seal to the Authorising of a Cheat, and giving Credit to an Imposture.

How strong soever these Proofs are, God did something more to convince Mankind : Miracles, no doubt, are very powerful to confirm the Truth God is pleased to reveal ; but how great soever they be, they are not out of the reach of Mens Malice ; Posterity may doubt of them, and the Eye-witnesses themselves may say, they were the Works of some Magician. If the *Jews* were so wicked as to say, That *Jesus* cast out Devils by *Beelzebub*, no question but their same malicious Spirit did suggest to them other Pretences, to decline the strength of his other Miracles.

God having foreseen the ill use they would make of this Proof, gave them another, which was out of the reach of their Malice : He forgets, as it were, a little

a little while, that he is a Father, and lets his Son know, that he ought to die, but his Death confirming the Truth of his Doctrine, should be an undisputable Warrant of his Sincerity.

C H A P. III.

Of the First and Great Reason of the Death of CHRIST.

GOD knowing the Hearts of all Men, and what would be the more proper to take with them, could find no better way to convince them of the Verity of the Gospel, than by his own Son's Death. When it costs a Man his Life, 'to witness to the Truth of something that hath been done, the World will be apt to think, that that Man is very certain of what he lays down his Life for; otherwise they would imagine, that it would be the highest pitch of Madness for him, to lose his Life in witnessing to a thing he hath not seen, and had known to be false: God therefore gives our Saviour such Assurance, as if he had taken him up into Heaven, to make him, an Eye-witness of the Place of Joy and Happiness, he prepares for the faithful Believers, as Christ tells us himself: * No *Joh. 3. 13.* Man, saith he, hath ascended up to Heaven, but he that came down from Heaven: even the Son of Man which was in Heaven. He works Miracles to confirm this Truth, and at last he sheds his own Blood to seal the Sincerity of his Testimony.

This is the first and great Reason of his Death; this Proof being the greatest which Christ could give, of the Truth of his Mission, it occurs in many places in the Gospel. 1. Christ insists upon it in his Discourses. 2. When the *Jews* ask him Signs for Proofs of his Mission, he refers them only to this. 3. Before his Judge he brings no other Reason of his Death, but this. And Lastly, He institutes Sacraments to preserve both the Memory, and the Design of it.

1. This great End of his Death, was the first thing he taught to those that came to him: † *As Moses, says he, to Nicodemus, lifted up the Serpent in the Wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal life.* That is, as the Brazen Serpent, which *Moses* lifted up in the Wilderness, was an evident Proof of his Mission, call'd in question, by healing those, which being stung with mortal Wounds, cast their Eyes upon it, by this Law-giver's Order: So the Son of Man crucified, shall heal Men of the old Serpent's Stings, by making them believe in him. *He must be lifted up,* says he, that Men considering that he would not suffer such a bitter Death for a Falshood, they should believe in him, and receive the Terms propos'd to avoid Death, and enjoy that Immortality, he gave us an Assurance of at the Cost of his own Blood.

This is the Reason why he adds in the next Verses, || *That God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, or exposed him to Death, as the Greek imports, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life.* God to the Miracles he wrought to confirm Christ's Doctrine, added something more; he would have *Jesus* himself to give us a Proof of his own: Therefore he gives him, and exposes him to Death, to make us believe his Testimony;

Atimony. If this be God's Intention, as our Saviour repeats it here once more, his Death must needs be a Martyrdom, or Witnessing to the Truth, and consequently ordered by God to make Christ give himself a Proof of his Sincerity, which should thoroughly convince the World of it.

Tho' this Design be never so amazing, Christ lets us know for all that, that
 * *Joh. 6. 53.* on the right apprehension of it, depended Mens Salvation : * *Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his Blood, ye have no Life in you.* That is, if ye do not look upon my Death, upon the shedding of my Blood, as upon a Testimony which I bear to the Truth, you cannot have Faith, the Spring of Life.

Our Saviour's main Design in all his Discourses, was to prove his heavenly Calling, or that he was truly sent by God ; he sets down at the 33d, 35th, and 38th Verses of this same Chapter, what he does intend to prove : *I am the Bread which cometh down from Heaven.* To prove this Assertion, he brings in his Death, and refers the *Jews* to it : † *The Bread that I will give is my Flesh, which I will give for the Life of the World :* That is, my Death will be the Proof of my Doctrine, which will make Mankind believe and procure their Salvation : ‖ *For my Flesh is Meat indeed, and my Blood is Drink indeed :* That is, my Body crucify'd, and my Blood shed, are solid Proofs of my heavenly Mission. Therefore he adds,
 * *Ib. v. 56.* * *He that eateth my Flesh, and drinketh my Blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him, i. e.* He that meditates on the End of my Death, and rightly apprehends it, is so far convinced of the Truth of my Doctrine, that nothing can separate him from me, and bereave him of my Promises. The effect which Christ's Death ought to produce upon Men, being of the greatest importance for their Salvation, makes him to insist so much upon it ; he exhorts earnestly here all the World to consider the true Reason of it, that having apprehended it, they might be induc'd to believe in him, and so procure themselves that Life, which depends on his Belief.

Secondly, Christ's Answer to the *Jews*, who required of him a Sign to prove his Mission, shews evidently, that his Death is a great Proof of it. † *Who art thou ?* say the *Jews* to him. *The same,* says Jesus, *that I said unto you from the beginning. When ye have lift up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am he.* That is, the promised Messiah, and that I do nothing of my self. If his Death were not a Proof of his Mission, this Answer to the *Jews*, who desired one, would prove nothing, and be nothing to the purpose, which would be unworthy of the Wisdom of our great Redeemer.

This Proof is the same he gives to the *Greeks*, who desired to see him, to be Witnesses to some of his Miracles : ‖ *Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a Corn of Wheat fall into the Ground, and die, it abideth alone : But if it die, it bringeth forth much Fruit.* He shews them, that he must die, to persuade Men of the Truth of his Gospel ; and that those who had a mind to be his Disciples, were to die too, to confirm the same Truth : *If any Man serve me, let him follow me,* says he, at the 26th Verse. Let him take up his Cross as well as I ; *And where I am, there shall also my Servant be.*

He says clearly to the *Jews*, who refused to believe in him, that he would give such a convincing Proof of his Sincerity by his Death, as that all Men would believe him : *If I be lifted up from the Earth, I will draw all Men unto me.* This

This is the Reason why he tells them at the Tenth Chapter of this same Gospel,* that they might certainly know him by this Proof, and distinguish him from false Shepherds. *The good Shepherd giveth his Life for the Sheep.* This is the Mark Chap. 10. by which I may be easily known; by this I will shew the vast difference which v. 11. is between me and the Hirelings, the false Christs, who flee at the sight of the Storm, and leave their Followers to shift for themselves; knowing how false their Doctrine is, they dare not maintain it at the Peril of their Lives. *All that ever* Ver. 8. *came before me are Thieves and Robbers.* If they gather Crouds of People after them, 'tis only to serve their own Ends. *The Hireling careth not for the Sheep.* Ver. 13. Their Followers Salvation is the least of their Care; their Flight, by which they leave them exposed to the Wolf's Mercy, shews it evidently. As for me, 'tis not so, *I am the good Shepherd, I lay down my Life for the Sheep.* This is the Ver. 11, 15. Reason why the Sheep hear me, and avoid becoming the Wolf's Prey: For considering my Death as a great Proof of my Sincerity, they stick fast to me, and withstand all the Assaults of the Enemies of my Gospel. Hence 'tis, that the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews calls him, *The great Shepherd of the Sheep,* Chap. 13. v. 12. *through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant.* Because the confirming of the Covenant by his Death, makes evidently appear, that 'tis he, who gives the true Food to our Souls.

Thirdly, Another thing, which clearly demonstrates, that our Saviour's Death is a Martyrdom for the Truth, is the bold Confession he witnessed before his Judge. The Jews accused him of being an Impostor, like those false Christs mentioned by Gamaliel, at the 5th Chapter of the Acts, *He deceiveth, he stirreth up the People,* say they, in order to make them shake off Caesar's Yoke. This is the chief Accusation they charge him with before Pilate; Christ zealous for the Truth of the Gospel, to which this black Slander gave a mortal Wound, delivers himself up into their Hands, appears before the high Council, before Pilate himself to confound their false Accusations: He knew it would cost him his Life, but yet Truth was dearer to him.

When the High-Priest adjures him by the living God, to tell them, Whether he be the Christ, the Son of God? He does not deny it, but maintains it, tho' he certainly foresaw, that his Confession would pass for a Blasphemy, and would be brought against him as a Capital Crime.

When Pilate, his Judge, says to him, * *Art thou the King of the Jews?* he answers him, *My Kingdom is not of this World.* Thou sayest that I am a King: To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the World, that I should bear Witness unto the Truth. This Answer deserves all our admiration: First Christ destroys the Jews false Accusation, who had brought him to Pilate, as a Man who pretended to make himself a King against Caesar's Right, my Kingdom being not of this World, and of quite another Nature than that of Caesar's, being all spiritual and heavenly; I have nothing to do with thy Master, who is an earthly King. Secondly, Our Saviour answers an Objection, which Pilate might raise out of his words: If thy Kingdom be heavenly, might Pilate have said to him, if thou comest from God, why does he suffer that thou shouldst be delivered unto me? Christ foreseeing this natural Objection, lets his Judge know, That the

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Sealing the Truth of his Doctrine with his own Blood, was the Great End of his Coming: *I come to bear Witness to the Truth.* Which is as much as to say, Do not wonder if thou seest me under thy Power, ready to be crucify'd; I come to be a Martyr for the Truth: Were this not the great Reason of my coming, I should not have been expos'd to the Rigor of thy Doom: The Condition wherein thou dost see me, is far from making thee believe I am an Impostor; but rather ought to convince thee, if thou wilt but examine the thing impartially, that the Death to which I expose my self, is an uncontestable Proof of the Truth of my Doctrine. *Every one that is of the Truth, or who loves the Truth, says he to him, beareth my Voice; or ought to be convinc'd, that the Confession which I witness at the Cost of my Life, is a true and a sincere one.*

Christ, considering he was come to bear Witness to the most important of all Truths, is not terrify'd at the Presence of his Judge, neither at the Outcries of a tumultuous Rabble, nor at the sight of a most cruel Death; he stands firm as a Rock, against which the raging Waves break themselves: Which great piece of Courage, is called by St. Paul, speaking to Timothy, *A good Confession.* *I give thee charge before God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good Confession, that thou keep this Commandment without spot.* That is, that thou shouldst lay hold on the Promise of an Eternal Life, as he expressed himself in the foregoing Verse.

Christ died then to testify to all Men, that there was another Life after this. This is the reason, why, in the Revelation, he is called, *The Martyr*, by way of excellency, or *the true and faithful Witness*: True, because he died to maintain that great Truth; *Faithful*, because he hath fully executed God's Order; therefore he cries out, in giving up the Ghost, *It is finished.* I have done what thou didst require of me, I have given to Men that Proof thou wouldst have me to give them, *I have finished the Work which thou gavest me to do*; now thou must do the rest. *Glorifie thou me, O Father, with thine own self, with the Glory which I had with thee before the World was.* That is, finish, O God, this Great Work, and raise me to that Greatness thou hast resolved to give me from all Eternity.

Fourthly, This Martyrdom is such a great, and such a surprizing Event, that Christ designed to keep for ever in his Church the remembrance of it; and that by instituting some external Signs, which striking into the Senses, should awake the Ideas of his Death in Christians, and keep up in their Minds the great Aim of it. This is the reason why he hath left two Ceremonies, which are a lively Image both of his Death, and the Design of it.

In the first, which is Baptism, Christians were dip't into the Water, to make them mindful of Jesus dead and buried; the coming out of the Water, sets forth plainly before them his Resurrection. By the solemn Vow they made, they shewed they were convinced of these great Truths, *Know ye not,* says St. Paul to the Romans, *that so many of us as were baptiz'd into Jesus Christ, were baptiz'd into his Death*: Which being look'd upon as a Proof of his Gospel, hath brought us to this holy Ceremony of Baptism.

Baptism was then ordained, in order to make Christians remember that Baptism of Blood, wherein Christ was dip't. *Ye shall be baptiz'd,* says he to his Disci-

Disciples, *with the Baptism that I am baptized with* : When a Man was received into the Christian Church, they made him to profess in his Baptism, the Fundamental Truths of the Gospel: So the Blood of Christ which flowed from his Veins, and covered his Body, was a Baptism, by which he witnessed this important Truth, that he was the Messiah, *Ye shall be baptized with the same Baptism* : You shall die, he means, to maintain the same Truth, for which I am a going to suffer.

As to the Death of his Disciples, it is call'd here a *Baptism*, not only for the same Reason as that of their Master ; but also, because by it, they did confess in a most solemn manner that great Truth, which the Profelytes used to profess in their Baptism, *viz. That Jesus was the Christ, that he died to maintain it, and rose again to confirm it.*

The Eucharist, which Christ instituted the Night he was betrayed, sets very well before us, both his Death, and the Design of it : *This is my Body which is given for you ; this do in remembrance of me : This Cup is the New Covenant in my Blood.* We learn by this Institution these two important Truths : 1. That Christ shed his Blood to confirm the New Covenant, or the Truth of the Promise of the Remission of Sins, and of an Eternal Life. 2dly, That this Memorial ought to be kept for ever in the Church. *This do ye, in remembrance of me : For as often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew the Lord's Death till he come.* To give us the last and strongest Proof of the Truth of the Gospel, by shewing in that Great Day, the fulfilling of the Promises he died for. 1 Cor. 11. 25, 26.

This is the Reason, why he is called, *the Surety of a better Covenant* ; not our Surety towards God, as 'tis commonly explained ; but God's Surety towards Men : Because he dies by his Order, to maintain, that there shall be certainly a Remission of Sins, and an everlasting Life, which is the promised Reward to all faithful and good Christians. Hebr. 7. 22.

Our Saviour, from amongst all his Actions, singles out but his Death, to keep a Memorial of it ; because his Miracles, his Resurrection and Ascension, are the Works of God, which at the first sight shew all the force of their proof, whereas his Death is his own Work. It was a most violent Agony he suffered for us, out of an excess of Love and Charity ; it is the great Seal of his Doctrine, and the strongest Proof which he could give of it, whose Design and Excellency we can know only by frequent and deep Meditations.

St. Paul was to ravished in himself, and so taken with the strength of this Proof, that he did believe, that the bare Relation of this Death, without the help of worldly Wisdom, was sufficient to convince Men of the Truth of the Gospel : *The Jews, says he, require a Sign, and the Greeks seek after Wisdom ; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.* That is, tho' his Death be the Scandal of the Jews, who look'd for a triumphing Messiah, yet 'tis the greatest Proof which a Man could give for the Truth of his Doctrine, and which shews an excellent Wisdom in its Contrivance, tho' the Greeks not knowing the Design of it, think it to be Folly : *But unto them which are called, who do seriously consider the great Reasons of this Death, they know very well, 'tis a most wise, and most powerful Motive for the Conversion*

tion of the World. Therefore he concludes at the 25th Verse, That Christ's Cross, tho' look'd upon as Foolishness, is a way so well contrived for Mens Salvation, that all their Wisdom was not able to attain to any thing like it; and that this Death, which appears to the *Jews* to be a weak Means, when they consider the Glory and Pomp of the delivering their Law, is a stronger Proof to persuade Mankind of the Truth of the Gospel, than any thing they could think of.

Hence it is, that St. Paul makes it among the *Corinthians*, the sole Object of his Knowledge: For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified: Which Knowledge he calls, The Testimony of God: Because Christ's Martyrdom, or Testimony, was God's own contrivance. The same Apostle sets before Judaizing Christians, how great wrong they did to Christ's Blood, by urging Justification by another Covenant, than that which was confirmed by the shedding of it. Is it possible, would he say to them, that Christ being made a Curse, to redeem you from the Curse of the Law, you would submit still to those Ordinances which were against you, after Christ took them out of the way, and nailed them to the Cross? If Righteousness cometh by the Law, when Christ is dead in vain. That is, if Circumcision, and the Law of Moses, be still the way, which we must follow to please God, Christ's Death would have been needless to confirm a new Covenant: Can you so far wrong God's Wisdom, as to believe, that he hath exposed his Son to Death without any Design? If then Christ be dead, both to confirm the Gospel, and take away the Law, why do ye make his Death needless, by building up again what it hath destroyed, and by urging another way of pleasing God, than that offered by Christ?

By what hath been said hitherto, every one may be convinced, that Christ's Death is a Martyrdom, or an Illustrious Testimony which he bore unto the Truth, a strong Proof of his Sincerity, and the great and main Reason of God's Wisdom, in giving up Christ to Death.

C H A P. IV.

Of the Second Reason of the Death of CHRIST.

THE Gospel-Dispensation, is a Concatenation of Proofs, which God hath given us of another Life; Christ works Miracles, dies at last to maintain it, and God raises him again to confirm it.

The Second Reason of Christ's Death, which is as great as the first, is, That God so ordered it, that he might raise him again, to shew in his own Person the Truth of the Resurrection he had revealed, and by raising him again, to give a stronger Proof, which should convince the World.

Christ gives, for his own part, the strongest Proof of his Sincerity, which can be given by a Man; God to this adds another, which sets that of his Son out of the reach of the Malice of Men: He raises him again, to make it evidently appear, that Christ had not taken upon himself to preach another Life, without his Order, by giving in his own Person an undeniable Proof of the Truth of his Preaching, he confirms in a most Authentick manner his Testimony. Is

Is there any thing more convincing to persuade Mankind of that great Truth, than to afford them a great Example of it ? Christ reveals to us another Life ; he tells us, that after the Separation of the Soul from the Body, tho' this returns to Dust, God shall one Day joyn together again those two Substances, that he might recompense the just with an immortal Happiness, and punish the Wicked with eternal Death. He dies in the sight of a whole Nation for this Doctrine ; and for fear that his Death should be called in question, because he gave up the Ghost sooner than those who were crucified with him, God makes it unquestionable, by suffering a Soldier to pierce his Side with a Spear, which reached to the Region of his Heart, from whence Water and Blood issued forth ; which are two of the three Witnesses spoken of by St. John, which plainly testify the Verity or Certainty of his Death. 1 Ep. 5. 8.

Christ's Death then evinces plainly the Truth of his Doctrine, his Blood is a true Witness of it : But God in raising of him, shews in his very Person the Truth he preached, his Resurrection is an actual Instance of the very thing which he had a mind to prove.

God does not make us a bare Revelation of another Life, he does not require our Assent upon the bare Word of his Messenger : But further, he sets before us convincing Examples of it, by raising him who first brought to light by the Gospel an immortal Life : Which shews evidently, that there is nothing more certain, than that Promise which hath for its fulfilling such great Warrants, as the Death and Resurrection of Christ.

To these two great and convincing Proofs, Christ refers the *Jews*, who required of him a Miracle to prove his Mission : *Destroy this Temple, and in three Days I will raise it up.* That is, I will maintain my Doctrine at the Cost of my Life ; which being laid down, I will take it again, according to the Commandment I have received of my Father. John 2. 19. John 10. 18.

The Apostles knew well the full strength of these Proofs, since St. John observes expressly, That when Jesus was risen from the dead, his Disciples remembered that he had said this unto them ; and they believed the Scripture, and the Word which Jesus had said. He gives them the same Proofs at the 20th Chapter of St. Mat. v. 18, 19. and lets them know, that his Death and Resurrection were the Great Design of God in the Gospel, and the powerful Means of the propagation of it.

Hence it is, that St. Paul ends the Dispute he had with the *Jews*, for the Christian Religion with this Reason : *Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right Hand of God, who also maketh Intercession for us :* That is, who is he that shall condemn us as Seducers, and Apostates ? When we preach that Christ's Gospel must be preferred to Moses's Law : It is Christ who died, to seal with his own Blood the Christian Religion ; and what is more, he is risen again : God set his own Seal to it, he made him sit at his Right Hand, and invested him with a Supreme Power, till he shall have put all his Enemies under his Feet, and fulfilled the Promises made to the Faithful. Rom. 8. 34.

Can the Gospel after such great Proofs be called in question ? Christ hath set

Rom. 8, 38,
39.

his Seal to it, his very Life, and his own Blood : God hath set his too, viz. his Almighty Power. By raising Christi out of the Grave, he confirms his Doctrine, and with him raises and enlivens the Hopes of true Believers, and engages them for ever to the Christian Religion : *I am persuaded, says St. Paul, that neither Death, nor Life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor Things present, nor Things to come, nor Height, nor Depth, nor any other Creature, shall be able to separate us from the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* He makes here a most solemn Proclamation, that nothing shall be able to work upon him so far as to make him forsake the Gospel, wherein God's Love is to be seen in Christi's Death and Resurrection, which are such evident Proofs, as ought to convince the *Jews*, that the Christian Religion is the only way to Salvation.

1Thess. 4. 14.

Indeed these two great Proofs are so evidently the Foundation of the Gospel, that the Christian's Happiness, as says St. Paul, depends upon the true belief of them : *For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him.* That is, those who died fully persuaded of the Truth confirmed by these two Proofs.

Christ's Resurrection being designed for the great Foundation of the Christian Religion, or for the greatest Proof which God could give of the certainty of another Life, his Wisdom appears in its full extent in his Death. God's Providence must here be vindicated from all the Aspersions of the Deists, since Christ's Sufferings were only contrived to raise him to the highest Greatness, and to ground the Gospel upon such a strong Proof, that neither all the Wit and Malice of Men, nor the very Gates of Hell could ever prevail against it.

C H A P. V.

An Answer to an Objection of the Deists, against Christ's Resurrection. Proofs of this Truth.

THE Consequence drawn from the Resurrection to establish the Truth of the Gospel, cannot reasonably be disputed : The Deists to avoid the strength of it, flatly deny it. They agree thus far with us, That *Christ* was put to Death by the *Jews*, who to this very Day leave nothing unattempted to vindicate their Ancestor's bloody Act : But we differ about his Resurrection. The Deists upon the *Jews* word, who take it to be a meer Imposture, call the Truth of it in question.

If *Christ*, say the Deists, be raised up, why did he not appear to those who had crucified him ? The very sight of him had so wrought upon them, that they would have believ'd in him, and drawn all the Nation after them. Why does he appear only to his Disciples, Persons altogether at his Command, whose Testimony might easily be suspected ? The open Confession drawn out of the Mouth of his greatest Enemies, had, no doubt, persuaded the World a great deal better.

To shew how weak this way of Arguing is, we must consider the Proofs which the Gospel offers us of *Christ's* Resurrection : The Marks of their Sincerity cannot

cannot be contested without a wilful obstinacy, and introducing *Pyrrhonism*, which would quite take away the assent we give to all events in the World.

We challenge the *Deists* to give as strong proofs for the truth of an event that happen'd long since, as we are able to do for the truth of *Christ's Resurrection* out of the Gospel.

First, 'Tis a Fact certified by the Eye-witnesses, who, during the space of forty days, had seen *Christ* many times, did talk, and eat with him, and received such proofs as convinced them of his Resurrection. At first they think him to be a Ghost, afterwards God makes *Thomas's* unbelief serve to the strengthening of the others Faith, by means of the proof which our Saviour did give him.

Secondly, 'Tis not upon the Word of one or two Witnesses that God founded this Truth; 'tis upon the Testimony of above five hundred Persons, who had seen *Christ* risen. They agree all, without varying, to testify the same thing, and expose themselves to the rage of their Nation, to Misery, and to Death it self; were they not Witnesses of the Fact, is it likely they would have undergone all the Troubles and Miseries they underwent, to maintain *Christ's Resurrection*?

Thirdly, God makes use of the *Jews* precaution, who would stop the Cheat, as they say, to convince them in such a manner of the Truth of *Christ's Resurrection*, that there was no room left for doubt. This great piece of God's Wisdom, vindicates his Providence, in not suffering our Saviour to appear to the *Jews*, and takes off the whole strength of the *Deists* objection.

The chief Priests and Pharisees came together with much noise to Pilate, saying, *Matt. 27. Sir, We remember that that Deceiver said, while he was yet alive, after three days 63, 64, 65. I will rise again. Command therefore that the Sepulchre be made sure until the third 66. day, lest his Disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, he is risen from the dead; so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate grants their request, Ye have a watch, says he, go your way, make it as sure as you can; so they went, and made the Sepulchre sure, by setting a strong watch about it.*

After all these precautions, the Angel comes, at whole sight all the Soldiers did shake, and turned pale as dead Men; he rouls the Stone away, and *Jesus* comes out of the Sepulchre. The Keepers being all afraid, and convinced with their own eyes of the Truth of *Christ's Resurrection*, came to the Chief Priests and Elders, and shewed them all the things that were done. Upon their Deposition, they assembled the Council: They could not doubt of *Christ's Resurrection*, since it was attested by Persons wholly devoted to them, and who had neither reason, nor prospect of interest to maintain it, as *Christ's Disciples* could have had; yet instead of giving glory to God, they pushed their Crime to the highest, *They gave large Money to the Soldiers, saying, say ye, his Disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept; as if those Persons, who had deserted their Master two days before, at the approach of the Officers of the Temple, had dared to look in the face of a Company of Roman Soldiers. They watch'd their time, one may say, while the Soldiers slept: But if they were asleep, how can they testify such a thing? What could have been the Apostles design in stealing away a dead Corps at the peril of their Lives?*

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Tho' this Report was never so false and ridiculous, yet it found entertainment with the Vulgar. What cannot Faithhood do, when supported by the Directors and Guides of Conscience? If after so great a proof of Christ's Resurrection, the chief of the *Jews* would deny the Truth, our Saviour's appearing to them had been to no purpose, for either out of malice they would not know him, or would have taken him for a Ghost, or thought his sight an illusion of the Devil's Power, as they had already said of his Miracles.

Fourthly, Another great piece of God's Providence, to be much taken notice of, is the Conversion to Christianity of *Cornelius a Roman Captain*, dwelling at *Cesarea*, not far from *Jerusalem*. *S. Peter* (who had received from Jesus the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, or the Privilege to open first the door of the Church both to the *Jews* and *Gentiles*) was sent to him by God's express Order to Convert him to the Gospel. God would have him to be the first of the Heathens coming to Christ, to confound the *Jews* wickedness, and the Soldiers false report; for the Authority he had over them, who had spread it, afforded him a sure way to know the truth of the matter in debate. The *Jews* having done what they could to spread abroad what they had taught the Soldiers to say, 'tis very like that *Cornelius* heard of it; and what is more natural, than that this pious Man, after an exact searching into the truth, and full understanding of it, should communicate it to others?

Fifthly, The pouring out of the Holy Ghost on the day of *Pentecost*, while the whole Nation was gathered together at *Jerusalem*, that having been a witness to his Shame, they might be so to his Glory: The Gift of Tongues, the Miracles wrought by the Apostles in the sight of all the *Jews*, and to the High Councils knowledge, were proofs sufficient, over and above, to convince them, had their wickedness not been at such a height. If, notwithstanding all these, they would not receive the Gospel, is there any likelihood they would be Converted, had Christ appeared unto them, since God himself, with all his Power, could not effect it? Had God left them without any proof of Christ's Resurrection, to punish their barbarous Cruelty, it would have been a just cause of wonder; but what he hath done to perfwade them of it, vindicates his Wisdom, and stops the *Deists* mouth; since he hath made it known to them by the Soldiers, whose Testimony they could not call in question, and by the Miracles he wrought in the Temple it self. No body but an irrational Man, can deny Christ's Resurrection upon such an account, for not shewing himself to the *Jews*.

Sixthly, Those they have put to Death for Christ's sake, were so many convincing proofs, God gave them of the Truth of Christ's Resurrection. Can one conceive that our Saviour's Disciples would have lost their Lives to maintain they were witnesses to it, if they were not? One may lay down his Life for a false Opinion, many Examples of it may be produced; for 'tis easie to impose upon Men in Speculative Matters, but upon a Matter of Fact it cannot be done. 'Tis impossible to make a Man of Sense believe, that he hath seen a thing which he hath not seen, and induce him to suffer Death to maintain it.

There is then nothing more certain than Christ's Resurrection, since it hath been confirmed not only by the Testimonies of Men, and God's Miracles; but
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what is more, by the Blood of those who were Eye-witnesses of it: They had rather part with their Lives than recant, and disown such an important Truth.

C H A P. VI.

Of the Third Reason of the Death of Christ.

GOD intending to propagate Christian Religion by Martyrdom, his Wisdom is to be admired in designing of Christ's Death; since by it, *Christ* hath not only Confirmed his Doctrine, and Ministr'd to God the occasion of raising him again, to show in his own Person the Truth he preached: but farther, he hath set before his Disciples a great Example and Encouragement in the affronting of Death, and shewed them how to lose joyfully their Lives, to maintain the Truth for which their Master had already suffered.

This is the third Reason of Christ's Death; He died to leave us an Example. *S. Peter* comforts with this great Truth, those that suffered for the Gospel's sake: *For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.* ^{1 Pet. 2. 21.}

Christ requires this act of Friendship of his Disciples towards their Neighbours: This is the very thing he exhorts them to practice, in that most tender Speech he addresses to them the same Night he was betrayed, and ready to be crucified for the Truth; he will have them to suffer for their Brethren in like manner. *This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.* ^{John 15. 12.} *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* ^{13.} That is, I am going to lay down my Life for you, and to strengthen by my own Example the Commandment I give you. You ought then to expose your Lives for Men, who are the Friends I leave you. He will have them to show their Love by their Death, as he did, knowing that their Martyrdom would be as well as his, a most powerful means to perswade Mankind, and render them holy.

This very Commandment is the same, the practice of which *S. John* authorized by Christ's Example, recommends to the Christians: *Hereby perceive we the love,* says he, *because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the Brethren.* ^{1 Joh. 3. 16.} That is, we must die as Christ did, to confirm our Brethren in the Truth. ^{So in the Greek.}

S. Peter backs our Saviour's Example with another consideration. He sets before Christ's Confessors, That since their Saviour, tho' Innocent and Just, died for Sinners to make them forsake their sins; *The just,* says he, *for the unjust, that he may bring them to God;* they ought so much the more, being Sinners as they were, to die for Men like themselves, since their Death would work upon their Fellows as Christ's Death did upon them. ^{1 Pet. 3. 18.}

To know how solid is this way of arguing, we must consider, 1. That *S. Peter* writes to Persecuted Christians. 2. That he hath a mind to encourage them to suffer, by setting before them Christ's Death under the notion of a Martyrdom. 3. He insinuates, That since Christ, tho' Holy and Just, died to pay his Obedience to God, what ought they not to do to please him, being so great Sinners.

Sinners as they were, and having so much need of his Mercy ? 4. He tells them, That their Death being a means to confirm the truth of the Gospel, would possess their Enemies with such a Shame, as would work to their Salvation, and put an end to all their sinful courses, as did that of Christ. *Forasmuch then as Christ*

1 *Tit.* 4. 1. *suffered for us in the flesh, arm your selves likewise with the same mind ; that is, take the same resolution to suffer. Lastly, He shows they had much reason to rejoice at the sight of their Sufferings, since by so doing they became like unto Christ, they died for the Truth as he did, with hope of partaking of the Glory which is to be revealed : Rejoyce in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.*

Sufferings are the price at which Christ hath propos'd heavenly Glory. There is no triumphing without fighting, we must tread in the steps of our Lord, if we will partake of his Greatness. *If any man, says he, will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. Whosoever will save his life shall lose it : and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it. That is, If one hath a mind to be one of my Disciples, let him be as ready as I, to die for the Truth ; and instead of losing his life, he shall recover it in a most glorious manner.*

Death then, and Sufferings, are the only Glory, the only Triumph he prepares for Christians upon Earth : *Let no man, says S. Paul, be moved by these afflictions, for your selves know, that we are appointed thereto.* God orders them for the furtherance of the Gospel : *My bonds in Christ, says the same Apostle, are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places, and many of the brethren in the Lord waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. If S. Paul's Sufferings made so deep an impression upon the minds of the Witnesses of them, what are those of Christ not able to do ?*

God designing to Establish the Christian Religion in such a surprising way, he could not pitch upon a fitter motive to encourage, and embolden Martyrs, than the setting before them the great Example of Christ's patience. The sight of their Captain dying upon a Cross, made them think themselves happy to follow his steps ; his Resurrection upheld them in their Trial, by seeing in it the glorious end which their Sufferings were to have. *'Tis a faithful saying, for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him ; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him.*

When a great action is about to be performed, Examples are the most proper motives to the performance of it ; we cannot but yield to the strength of them, if those that give them be many degrees above us. Let a King expose his Sacred Person in a fight, the Soldiers, forgetting the danger, stoutly follow him. God knowing how deep an impression upon Men's mind this great Example would make, first exposes to Death Christ our Lord and King, that his Martyrdom should make us Sacrifice our Lives for the Truth. *It became him in bringing many Sons unto Glory, to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through Sufferings, that his Example should encourage Martyrs, which were to follow him.*

This was the reason why the Apostles thought it a great Honour to suffer shame for the Gospel : They look upon their Sufferings as a gift of Heaven. *for unto you it is given not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for him.* S. Paul lets the Philippians know, that by their Sufferings they did requite, in some manner, what Christ suffered for them.

The

The Apostles Sufferings being the greatest proof they could give of their sincerity, they confirmed thereby the Churches in the Faith, and finished what those of Christ had begun; that is, to convince the World of the verity of the Christian Religion. *I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his bodies sake, which is the Church.* Colos 1.24. *I rejoice,* says he to the Philippians, *if I be offered upon the sacrifice, and service of your faith.* Philip 2.17. He gives them to understand, that the Death he was a going to suffer, by which he confirmed the Faith he had preached, as he tells his Disciple Timothy, 2 Ep. 4. 6, 7. would be an Offering super-added to Christ's Sacrifice, or rather a new proof, which should strengthen their resolution of serving God, by believing the truth already confirmed by Christ's Death, and which they confirmed themselves by their Sufferings: *Always bearing about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.* 2 Cor. 4. 10. That is, that our Sufferings might be a proof of Christ's Resurrection. *So even death worketh in us, but life in you.* 11. We are exposed, says he, to Death, but we do not lose the fruit of our Sufferings, since thereby we bear witness to Christ's Resurrection, the great foundation for our belief of the Gospel. *Ibid. 12.*

This is the reason why he exhorts the Ephesians *not to faint at his tribulations.* I suffer for you, says he, *which is your glory.* Eph. 3. 11. That is, I suffer to give you a proof of the Truth, and to let all the World know, that when you embraced Christ's Doctrine, you did nothing but what was Brave and Great, since you have believed the Truth.

'Tis upon this account that 'tis said the Apostles have suffered for us, and that their Death is conformable to Christ's Death: They have been baptized with the same Baptism. The Death of their Captain encouraged them; his Resurrection, which they witnessed in such a courageous manner, comforted them against the sad consequents of Death: *Looking unto Jesus the author, and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.* Heb. 12. 2, 3. *For consider him that endured such contradictions of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.* The Author of this Epistle, fearing that that cloud of Witnesses, those renowned Examples mentioned before, should not make a sufficient impression upon those, who were persecuted for Righteousness sake, he sets before them Christ's Martyrdom, and the reward of it; he calls him the Author and Finisher of our Faith, because by his Death he hath given the first Example, and the first proof of the Christian Faith, and will one day crown the Faith of all others. He bids them to consider the great Example of Christ's Patience, which is able to uphold the weakest Christians, and to make their Sufferings easie to them.

God's Wisdom shines then in a most illustrious manner in Christ's Death, since it makes Christians suffer for their Brethren, with the same constancy of mind he suffered himself for them, and ministers God an occasion to show them in Christ's Resurrection the glorious end of their Sufferings. God so well orders all things here, that he makes their Martyrdom serve to his Glory, to Christ's Cause, to their Neighbours Advantage, and at last to their Happiness.

The *Deists* must own, no doubt, that there is nothing in all this Design, but what is Great and Wise; and that *Christ's* Death, which at first sight seems to be a Stumbling-block to some, and Folly to others, is nothing less, since when beheld in its true light, there is to be seen in it all the Lineaments of an Infinite Wisdom, which make it the worthiest Object of Mens admiration.

C H A P. VII.

Of the Fourth Reason of the Death of CHRIST.

THE admirable effect, which God foresaw *Christ's* Death would work upon the Minds of Men, to bring them to a good Life, is a very Wise and Important reason of it. The weight which carried Men downward, was too heavy to be Counterpois'd by what was weak, nothing but the hope of an everlasting Life could counterpoise it, or, however, carry it: *Christ's* Death, and Resurrection, by perswading us of this Truth, ought to work upon us, and make us fulfil the Conditions upon which so great a Happiness was proposed to us.

Man is a Free Agent, and a Rational Creature; he must have Reasons stronger than the allurements of Sin, to make him take a course opposite to his Inclinations, God having designed *Christ's* Death for the great Reasons already spoken of, both perswades us, and inclines our Hearts to every excellent Virtue.

The Christian Religion properly, is nothing else but Natural Religion, whose light Sin had almost extinguished; God, to give to it its first Splendor, yields *Christ* up to Death, which vindicates us from the slavery of Sin. Hence it is that *Christ's* Death is called *our Ransom*, the price wherewith we have been bought. † *The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and to give his life a ransom for many.* That is, I come not to be served, but to serve Men, by taking them out of the misery sin made them groan under; knowing my death would be an effectual means towards it, I lay down my Life to be a Ransom, or Deliverance, to save my People from Sin, and free them from Death the sure wages of Sin.

Christ is then called *Saviour*, and *Redeemer*, and his Death a *Ransom*, and a *Price*, because 'tis the great means of our Deliverance, and the powerful motive which redeems us from Sin and Death, and brings us to God, in hope of the certainty of that Life confirmed by his own Blood. || *He gave himself,* says S. Paul, *a ransom for all, a testimony in due time.* This Text evinces plainly, That if *Christ's* death be our *Ransom*, 'tis because by bearing witness to the Truth in the proper time, when he was called to it, he perswades us, and induces us, to lead a good Life; and so having delivered us from the power of Sin, he frees us from the power of Death, according to God's Promise; * *I will ransom them from the power of the Grave.*

The great aim of *Christ's* Sufferings then, is to make us good Men;—this is the great work of our Redemption, and the very Truth we learn of S. Paul; † *Christ,* says he, *has given himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* || *He gave him-*

* 1 Cor. 6. 20.

† Mat. 20. 28.

|| 1 Tim. 2. 6.

* Hos. 13. 14.

† Tit. 2. 14.

|| Gal. 1. 4.

himself for our sins, i. e. to destroy our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world. * Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctifie it, and cleanse it. These Texts, and many others, wherein Christ is said to die for us, that we have been redeemed by his Blood, that his Blood purges our Consciences from dead works, show evidently that the great design of Christ's Death, by perswading us of the Truth of the Gospel, was to inspire us with Holiness, and to adorn our Souls, with those Vertues which are able to bring us to God, who looks upon us as his dear Children, when we are once reconciled to him by a good Life. * You that were some time alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now have been reconciled, in the body of his flesh, through death, to present you holy and unblameable, and unreproucheable in his sight. ^{1 Pet. 1. 18.} ^{Heb. 8. 14.} ^{Col. 1. 21.} ^{22.}

S. Paul was so far perswaded that Christ's Death was a most powerful motive to make us forsake sin, as to tell us with an expression both strong and figurative, that † Our old man was crucified with him. S. Peter knew very well too the excellency of this motive, since he expresses himself in the same elegant manner, saying, || That Christ bare our sins in his own body on the Tree; to nail them to the Cross, no doubt, as it is said upon another occasion, * That he took out of the way the hand-writing of ordinances, and nailed it to the cross, that it might not be an hinderance to the Propagation of the Gospel, and to the Gentiles calling. That is, he had abolished it by his Death, and taken quire away its Power, because his Blood confirmed the Truth of another Covenant, which did put an end to the first. Even so Christ, by his Martyrdom, crucifies Sin, takes away its strength, as S. Peter insinuates it to us, when he tells us at the end of the Verse before-mentioned, that the reason why Christ bare our sins, is, That we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness. By his stripes, says he, we were healed. What was their disease? He tells us at the last Verse, They were as sheep going astray, which Christ's Death caused to return, when they came to consider the sincerity of his Testimony, and that it was he who was the true Shepherd, who gave the true Food to their Souls.

Christ's death, then, as a proof of his Doctrine, quite destroys sin, by the powerful motive it affords us to a good life; which Truth the same Apostle teaches us in proper and decisive words, * Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sin, that ye no longer should live the rest of your time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. ^{1 Pet. 4. 1.} ^{2.}

This is the great conclusion S. Paul commonly drew from Christ's death: † If † 2 Cor. 5. one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which for them died, and rose again. ^{14. 15.} He joyns here together the two great proofs of the Christian Religion, and shows clearly that their chief aim is to make us good Men. This Text evidences this main design of Christ's death, and proves sufficiently, that the sense we have given to other places is true, since to die for us, signifies here, without all dispute, to die for confirming of his Doctrine to us, and bringing us thereby to holiness, even as to rise for us, signifies to perswade us of the Truth of the Resurrection, by the example we see in his own Person.

Nothing ought to convince us more of the Truth of the Gospel, than this great design of *Christ's* death: If this astonishing way, which God used to destroy sin, doth not affect our Minds, nothing can. We see in the Cross of our Saviour, Vice drawn to the Life in all its ugliness; we discover in it God's hatred against it, and his love for Holiness. God, by not sparing Innocence it self to put an end to sin, shows what the Sinner must expect, if he dare commit it, after it cost God's Son his Life to destroy it; the shedding of so precious Blood, lets us know we are unworthy of the least Mercy, if afterwards we take any delight in Sin.

One cannot wonder enough at the mistake of the most part of *Christians*; their Life is a concatenation of Vices, and a perpetual indulging to Lust. If one ask them upon what ground they hope to be Saved? They answer with much confidence, They trust in *Christ's* Blood, whose Merit, say they, will supply our deficiency. Of the great motive God uses to make them Virtuous, they make their matter of Security; they disappoint God's design in *Christ's* death, and for all that they flatter themselves with receiving all the Advantages it is to procure to all faithful Believers.

'Tis very easie to find out the cause of their mistake: The love they have for the World, makes them look upon *Christ's* death only as a Sacrifice which expiates Sin. They think that an Act of Faith, by which they apply to their Souls, let them be never so polluted, the Merit of *Christ's* Blood is enough to save them. Their error throws the *Deists* into a mistake too, who think to discover here the weak side of Revelation: The prejudices of both proceed from a false Notion they frame to themselves of *Christ's* death, which may be easily rectified, by giving just and clear notions of it considered as a Sacrifice, and shewing under what terms *Christ's* death becomes a Victim, which expiates sins; and this we are a going to do, without lessening the efficacy of *Christ's* Blood which God's Mercy hath so highly valued.

C H A P. VIII.

Of the Death of Christ considered as a Sacrifice.

THere are two things, which must be distinguished in *Christ's* death, to have clear Notions of it. 1. By confirming the Covenant, it assures us of the Remission of Sins, which is one of its Promises. But yet there is something more, we see in it, The great consideration which makes God to forgive us; 'tis the Sacrifice, for the sake of which he is reconciled to us.

Tho' this manner, in which the Sacred Writers present *Christ's* Death, be at first very amazing and surprizing, yet the reasons of it once well understood, afford us matter of admiring God's Infinite Wisdom and Goodness.

The *Deists* reject this Notion, and cannot conceive that God being so merciful as he is, should require Blood. They accuse us to represent God as Cruel and Savage, as the worst of Beings, whose Revenge nothing but a Humane Victim could satisfy. But what is more, they charge us to make this Death serve to the extinguishing of Morality, and afford matter of Security to Sinners, by presenting

presenting it to them as a shelter to their Crimes, however enormous they be.

I do own, the Scholastick Divinity hath carried this Notion of Sacrifice too high, and stretched it beyond its true intent ; and I do own too, the abuse the greatest part of Christians make of it, hath given a specious pretence to the Deists Objection. 'Tis easie to confute it, and shew the Injustice of it, by setting forth *Christ's Death*, in the Light of the Gospel. Those who do intend to attack the Christian Religion this way, confound the Notions Scripture hath given us of *Christ's Death*, with false Glosses on them, and do not consider the Reasons of this wise Dispensation. The manner how *Christ's Death* becomes a Sacrifice, hath something so great, and so admirable in it, that it must serve to establish, rather than to destroy the Gospel.

When the Apostles began to preach *Christ crucified*, among the *Jews*, and the Gentiles, tho' their Object of Worship differed much, yet the manner of serving him was almost the same ; since the false Gods had the same Sacrifices offered in their Temples, which the true God had in his own. They did all agree about the necessity of Sacrifices, to appease God ; for it was a Maxime receiv'd among the *Jews*, That *without shedding of Blood, there was no Remission of Sins*. Some Heathens went so far, as to sacrifice Humane Victims, their very Children ; believing that the more excellent the Victim was, the more pleasing it would be to God.

We shall not insist here to examine the first Origine of this Opinion, 'tis enough to observe, that the Preaching of the Gospel found Men generally prepossessed with it. God neither expressly condemns it, nor approves of it ; but like a wise Director, and skilful Artist, he countenances it, in order to make it subservient to his End, and to erect the Cross more easily upon the Ruines both of the Law, and of Heathenish Religion. God by condescending to the weakness of Men, comes to his great Aim, and puts an end to the barbarous way of serving him, used among the Heathens ; and a step at the same time to the Slaughter made in all the Temples of the World, which hindered Men from worshipping him after the true manner he required : Therefore he declares expressly, That he looks upon the Death of his Son, permitted for the great Reasons already mention'd, as the only Sacrifice which could please him, and procure the Remission of Sins ; provided Men would believe the Gospel, and shew by a good Life, the Sincerity of their Faith.

A Man who embraced the Gospel, finding in *Christ's Death* all the Advantages which he hoped to receive from other Victims, was easily convinced of their uselessness. The Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, intending to invalidate the Law, offers to them chiefly the Death of our Saviour under this Notion : He shews them, That all the Efficacy of *Levitical Sacrifices* was nothing, compared to the great Advantages they receiv'd from *Christ's Sacrifice* : He opposes *Christ* and his *Death*, to the Priests of the Law, and to the Imperfection of their Victims. He says, in a manner, to them, You say, that *without shedding of Blood, there is no Remission of Sins* ; and here we offer you the Blood of the Son of God, which did once for all, what that of Beasts could not do, tho' continually offered up.

God

God makes use of the same Name for the Death of *Christ*, which was used in the Law, *i. e.* *Sacrifice* ; he rejects all the Sacrifices of Brute Beasts, while he honours *Christ's Death* with that Name. When *David* deplores his Crime, knowing that it could not be expiated by the Blood of any Sacrifice, he does not look upon *Burnt-Offerings* as *Sacrifices*, but he gives that Name to * the *broken Spirit*, and to the contrite Heart : Because the Grief he felt for his Sin, was more pleasing to God Almighty, than all the Sacrifices he could offer.

* *Psal.* 51. 17.

God himself gives that Name to the Act of Zeal of *Phineah*, and lets the *Jews* know, That this only Action had done, what all the Sacrifices could not do. † *Numb.* 25. † *Phineah*, says he, *hath turned away my Wrath* : And because he was zealous for his God, he made an Atonement for the Children of *Israel*.

† *Numb.* 25. 13.

Every Act of Obedience is then a *Sacrifice* in the sight of God, the one more, the other less ; *Christ's Death* being the most pleasing thing to God, that ever could be, became for that Reason, the only and great Sacrifice of the Gospel. We must not fasten this Notion on the Death of *Christ*, as a Physical or Natural Action, but on the Excellency of it, which consists in giving his Life for the Glory of God, and the Interests of Truth ; this is it which makes it a *Sacrifice* of a sweet-smelling Savour to God.

We must observe here, that God in condescending graciously to Mens weaknesses, renders to *Christ's* Performances what they have merited ; and this is a Second Reason of this wise Dispensation.

Nothing makes *Christ's Death* more valuable than the high Esteem God hath for it ; for if the Glory of the first Design of our Redemption must be ascribed to God, we must attribute to *Christ* the Honour of having performed what was the hardest in it. The Death of the Cross was an Act of a great Patience, of a fervent Charity, of a deep Humility, and of a total Obedience : God to recompense it worthily, and let the World know what Esteem he had for such an high piece of Virtue, declares, That he looks upon *Christ's Death* as a *Sacrifice*, and that for his sake he will forgive all those for whom he shall make Intercession ; that is, all true Believers, and Penitents.

The *Jews* committed the most enormous of all Crimes ; *Christ* did a most heroick Action in dying for the Truth ; and God does a thing answerable to his Goodness, in setting such a value on *Christ's Death*, and looking upon it as a *Sacrifice*, from which he smells a sweet Savour. Hence it is, that *S. Paul* says, That *Christ* hath been crucified for us, in such a manner as never any Man was.

* *1 Cor.* 1. 12.

* *Hath Paul been crucified for you ?* Tho' *Paul*, and the other Martyrs, died for the Truth, 'tis not their Death which confirms the Covenant, and procures the Remission of Sins. *Christ's Death* only hath this Glory and Advantage ; God for its sake raises him to the highest Degree of Power, and gives him an Eternal Priesthood. *Christ glorified not himself, so he made an High-Priest ; but*

Heb. 5. 5.

he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee : He means at the Day of his Resurrection, when he was installed in his Office, as the Apostle

1b. 8, 9, 10.

insinuates to us a little lower : Tho' he were a Son, yet learned he Obedience by the things which he suffered ; and being made perfect, he became by his Sufferings the Author of Eternal Salvation, unto all them that obey him ; called of God, an High-

Priest

Priest after the Order of Melchisedeck. This shews evidently, that the Notion of Sacrifice fixed upon Christ's Death, is the Recompence of his Obedience; God takes him into Heaven to offer there his Blood, which having been shed to confirm the Covenant, minds God as it were of the Promise he made to forgive, and bestow eternal Life on faithful Believers, for the sake of his Sufferings, and Intercession. * *If any Man sin, we have, says St. John, an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the Propitiation for our Sins, standing at the right Hand of God, to intercede in our behalf; and not for ours only, but also for the Sins of the whole World.* 1 Joh. 2. 1, 2.

Where is here to be seen, either any Injustice, or Cruelty? There is not so much as any shew or colour of it. Which of his Perfections does God violate? If he be the offended Person, can he not prescribe the Satisfaction he desires? † *I am he, says he, that blottereth out thy Transgressions for mine own sake: That is to say, I am he who shew Mercy as I please.* † 1st. 43. 25.

When a rebellious City lies at the King's Mercy, no Body finds fault with the General Pardon he grants for the sake of some Persons, who testified their Allegiance by some great Action? What can a Deist say against God's way of dealing? When he looks upon the Death of his Son as a full Satisfaction, as a Sacrifice in our stead, and discharges penitent Sinners for the sake of his Sufferings?

If God, under the Law, did forgive some kind of Sins for Sacrifices offered to him: If Phineas's Action made Propitiation for the Sins of the whole People; why cannot God accept his Son's Death, as a Sacrifice offered for Sins? His pleasure sets his Value on Christ's Death, by the Estimate God hath given of it, being far from finding fault with it; since all this is done out of Love for us: || *God loved us, says St. John, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins.* || Ep. 4. 10.

How great soever the Recompence is, Christ hath received for his Sufferings, this is a solid Truth, That his Death does expiate no Sins, but when we do heartily believe that the Gospel was sealed by his Blood. We learn thus much from St. Paul, who tells us expressly, That * *God hath set forth Christ to be a Propitiation, through Faith in his Blood.* He shews, That God never intended to be appeased with us, but when we believe in his Son's Blood; that is to say, when we believe that he died to confirm the Promises of the Covenant, in this sense his Blood is said to justify us, and to set us in the way of partaking of the Gospel's Promises: † *Now, says S. Paul, being justified by his Blood, i. e. now being approved with God, because we believed the Truth confirmed by his Blood, now being reconciled to him by the Death of his Son; which, by giving us a Motive in due time, when we were yet without strength, and unworthy, wrought upon us the Effect God designed, by bringing us to him; now, says he, we shall be saved from Wrath, we shall be saved by his Life.* But if after such a strong Motive to Holiness, we make void God's Design through our Unbelief, and Impenitency, we shall receive no Benefit by his Death and Resurrection. † Rom. 5. 9. Ibid. v. 6.

We observe this against the Deists, who charge us with making Christ's Death serve to the lessening of Piety. If Christ gave himself for us, says our great Dr. Hammond, it was, not that absolutely or presently we might be acquitted and saved, but that he might redeem us from all iniquity, from the reigning power, as well

well as Guilt, and that impartially, of all Iniquity, and purifie us to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good works, Tit. 2. 14. Without which Acquisition of Purity, and Zeal of Good Works in us, Christ fails of his Aim and Design in dying for us; he is deprived of that Reward of his Sufferings, which is mentioned, 1la. 53. 10 The seeing of his Seed, the having the Pleasure of the Lord, (which is said to be our Sanctification, 1 Thel. 4. 3) prosper in his Hand, &c. And if he fail of his hope, much more shall we of ours; after all that Christ hath done and suffered, the impenitent unreformed Fiduciary shall perish. Christ's Death is then only a Sacrifice for the true Believers, and sincere Professors of Christianity in their Lives.

It would be a very dangerous Opinion to believe, that Christ's Death, is, of its own Nature, a Payment to God's Justice, which takes away the Guilt of Sin, without our fulfilling the Conditions of the Gospel; far from being a Payment, it becomes a Sacrifice, and Satisfaction only, because God accepts of it out of his Mercy, and it expiates no Sins, but of those who make themselves remarkable by their Faith and Obedience. God imposes absolutely these Conditions, to hinder Men from making of it a pretence to sin. There is nothing in all this, which flatters Sinners, and hushes them in their Vices; but on the contrary all, encourages them to forsake Sin, and live virtuously.

If the Scripture tells us, that Christ is dead for us, and for our Sins, it signifies by these Expressions, that Christ is dead to destroy sin; this is the first and great Aim of his Death. But we must observe, that these same Expressions signify too very often, to take away the Guilt of Sin; these are two different Effects of Christ's Death, for not distinguishing of them, the Christian World hath been troubled so long with an unhappy Controversie, which raised such a Mist, that very few have been able to see clearly through it: For tho' both sides are agreed in the thing, i. e. That Christ died to save us from the Wrath of God, and to procure our enlargement from eternal Death, by making us good Men, and procuring the Remission of our Sins; yet they seek a quarrel, and an occasion of difference, where there is no real ground for it; for they can easily put an end to all their Controversies, if they will but apply these two different Sences, to these same Expressions.

If Christians then would frame to themselves clear Notions of Christ's Death, they would soon agree together, and avoid to give an occasion to the Deist's Unbelief, by their Divisions. As we have explained here the thing, we lessen no ways the Efficacy of that most precious Blood; since we maintain, that it can expiate the Sins of all the whole World, and we afford no occasion to Sinners of making it a pretence for the slackning of Piety. The first and great Design of Christ's Death, is to make us forsake Sin, by affording us in his Martyrdom, a powerful Motive to destroy it: God will make us believe, and inspire into us Virtue by that means. After we have answered his Design, he makes us look upon Christ's Death as upon a Victim that turns away his Wrath; his Wisdom uses this great Event to subordinate Ends, if we miss to answer the first, the second will do us no good.

The greatest part of Christians, for not observing this Subordination, have changed God's Method, in bringing for the first and principal Reason of this Death,

Death, the Expiation of our Sins ; whereas, 'tis but a subordinate, and a natural consequence of it. God never looks upon *Christ's Death* as an *expiatory Sacrifice*, if Men do not answer his first Design. In a word, God's Wisdom orders it for a Proof of the Gospel, from whence we must draw a Motive to Holiness ; afterwards, out of his Goodness he accepts of it as a *Sacrifice*, and *Propitiation*, knowing that this new Notion would be a new Motive, which calming our Consciences, would encourage us afresh to lead a good Life.

C H A P. IX.

That Christ's Death is a Design very worthy of God's Wisdom. Of the Advantages Men receive by it, together with the Greatness of the Reward Christ hath obtained. An Objection answered.

THE plain Account we have just now given of *Christ's Death*, and the Native Simplicity with which we have explained the Reasons of it, evince evidently, that nothing but an infinite Wisdom could contrive it : The admirable Effects it works upon Mens Minds and Hearts, argue plainly its Divinity. Besides that, the value God hath set upon it, together with the greatness of *Christ's* Recompence for his Sufferings, clearly vindicate whatever can be brought against it. Nothing could be more wisely, or better contrived for Mens Salvation. All things agree here with the natural Notion we have of an infinitely perfect Being. We reject that Doctrine which represents him more concern'd to punish Sin, than to reform it, as a fierce and merciless Deity, whose Revenge nothing but Blood could satiate ; and we speak of him under no other Notion, but that of the mercifullest, and wisest of all Beings.

Who, but God, to whom all the Springs of our Hearts are known, could find a more effectual way to assure Mankind of another Life, and reform their Morals ? Hope and Fear are the two great Motives of Mens Actions ; the greater is the Good we look for, and the more terrible the Evil we fear, we strive the more to obtain that, and avoid this.

God's great Design being to make Men hope all Good, and fear all Evil, he could not give us stronger Proofs of Heaven and Hell ; unless he were to transport us by Turns now into one, and then into the other. If God should use such means, it would quite take away Faith, Liberty, and even Vertue it self : For where is the Man, who having enjoyed only one Day the Happiness of Heaven, and felt as long the Torments of Hell, who would after such an Impression, venture his Salvation for some Temporal Interest, or Pleasure ? We must allow a free Exercise to Faith, and to the Practice of Vertue ; this is the Price God offers Heaven at : Easie Terms, if we but consider what God hath done to facilitate them to us. In *Christ's Death* he gives us an undeniable Proof of his Doctrine, and in his Resurrection he shews us the great Truth he dies for.

God intending to make Men holy, could not take a more effectual course ; there is nothing hard for a Man, who believes another Life upon such grounds ; for with such a help he easily overcomes whatever makes opposition against him.

All things are then easie to a Christian, who looks to the high Recompenſe which *Chriſt's* Faith and Obedience have received; and conſiders that his Reward is the ſtrongeſt Foundation of God's Promiſes, and the greateſt Assurance a true Chriſtian can have.

God's Wiſdom hath then ſo well contrived things, that the Croſs ſerves both to Mens Salvation, and to *Chriſt's* Grandeur: With reference to us, it ſerves to our Salvation, by removing our Doubts, deſtroying our Vices, and appealing the Conſcience; 'tis altogether a Proof to make us believe, a Motive to Holineſs, and a Sanctuary againſt God's Wrath, for broken and contrite Spirits: With reference to *Chriſt*, it ſerves to his Exaltation, or procures him theſe four things:

1. The Empire of all the World, or the Authority over all Creatures, over Men whom he governs and protects, over Angels whom he commands as he pleaſes, and over Devils themſelves, whoſe Malice he reſtrains: * *He humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Croſs: Wherefore God alſo hath highly exalted him, and given him a Name which is above every Name: That at the Name of Jeſus every Knee ſhould bowe, of Things in Heaven, and Things in Earth; and Things under the Earth; and that every Tongue ſhould confeſs, that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.*

2. The Power of ſending the Holy Ghoſt, or of endowing Men with the Power of working Miracles: † *Therefore being by the right Hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the Promise of the Holy Ghoſt, he hath ſhed forth this, which ye now ſee and hear.*

3. The Power of procuring Eternal Life to thoſe, who came to God by him, or the Privilege of interceding with efficacy for them to his Father: || *Wherefore he is able alſo to ſave them to the uttermoſt, that come unto God by him, ſeeing he ever liveth to make Interceſſion for them.*

4. The Authority of judging all Men at the laſt Day: * *God hath appointed a Day in the which he will judge the World in Righteouſneſs, by that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all Men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead.*

How great ſoever the Power is, which *Chriſt* hath obtained by his Death, yet God hath reſerved to himſelf three Things; which being as a kind of Homage, plainly evince, that *Chriſt* derives, and holds all his Glory from God's Goodneſs.

1. The Knowledge of the Dooms-day: † *But of that Day, and that Hour, knoweth no Man: No, nor the Angels which are in Heaven; neither the Son, but the Father.*

2. The Prerogative of being by himſelf the Supreme and Head-Judge at the laſt Day, who ſhall determine the Fate of all Men; whereas *Jeſus Chriſt* is only to be his Mouth and Miniſter, by whom God will pronounce that great and laſt Sentence, according to what *St. Paul* ſaith, in the famous Paſſage before cited, *Act. 17. 31. God hath appointed a day, &c. and Rom. 2. 16. In the Day wherein God ſhall judge the Secrets of Men, by Jeſus Chriſt, according to my Goſpel.*

3. The Liberty of reſuming the Kingdom into his own Hands, after *Chriſt* hath got a compleat Victory over all his Enemies: || *Then cometh the end, when he ſhall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, when he ſhall have put.*

* *Phil. 2. 8, 9, 10, 11.*

† *Act. 2. 33.*

|| *Heb. 7. 25.*

* *Act. 17. 31.*

† *Mar. 13. 32.*

|| *1 Cor. 15. 24.*
2*

put down all Rule, and all Authority, and Power; for he must Reign till he hath put all Enemies under his Feet. Therefore the Apostle says in the next Verses, That * *tho' God had put all things under him, is it manifest, that he is excepted, which* * Ver. 27. *did put all things under him.* He means, that God hath not resigned his Power to Christ in such a manner, that he cannot reassume it when he pleases, *he hath not put himself under him*; that is to say, he is always Master of his Power, and the time will come, that the Son shall yield up his Government, and shall himself be subject unto him, as all other Creatures; and God shall be all in all; that Ver. 28. is, he shall be then our only immediate Lord and King, whereas he governs us now by the Mediation of his Son Jesus Christ.

It may be objected here, that 'tis very strange, since Christ's Sufferings were to be but a step to his Glory, to see him tremble, and dread the approach of Death more than other Martyrs; who, as History tells us, went to Death, how terrible soever, with an undaunted Courage, and even with Joy, tho' their Remembrance and Assurance fell far short of that of Christ.

Many Reasons are given of his Agony and Consternation: Some believe, that standing in the Sinner's room, to satisfy God's Justice, he groaned under the weight of his Wrath: 'Tis very hard to conceive, God angry with our Saviour, in that very moment, he shews himself ready to do the most heroick, and the most charitable Action. Others think, that the sight of the Calamity, which he did foresee about to fall upon the Jews, for their most cruel and barbarous usage of him, raised Commiseration in him, and caused a dropping Sweat over all his Body, as the sight of Jerusalem, had drawn Tears from his Eyes some Days before.

But to answer the Objection otherwise, we must observe these three things: 1. That we see the Death of Martyrs only on the fairest side, we do not know their secret Thoughts at the approach of Death; Historians would think, they should stain their Hero's Reputation, if they should not conceal their Weakness; they only relate to us what they said upon the Scaffold, or the Pile, at that very moment God's Spirit comforted them in a most extraordinary manner, or at least at that time, that having seriously weighed all things, they had rather part with their Lives, than with the Pleasures of Heaven.

2. We must consider, that Christ in his Agony, was left to himself, destitute of the help the Martyrs received, and that for a Reason very worthy of God's Wisdom and Goodness towards Men: Christ being to be exalted into God's Throne, for his Sufferings, and so to become the Protector of the Church, and dispense God's Power to help those who were to die for his Cause; God would have him to know for a while, the full extent of Humane Weakness, that learning it from his own Experience, he should be the sooner moved to Compassion towards them, that should be exposed to the same Trial. This was a very great Instance of God's Wisdom to make our Saviour pity the Martyrs Condition, and readier to use his Power for their Comfort. This is the true Reason of Christ's Agony, which is clearly set down in the Scripture: * *For in that he himself hath* * Heb. 2. 18. *suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.* We have not an High-Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our Infirmities, but was

in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Hence it is, that he hath as quick a Sense of his Martyrs Pains, as themselves have; witness that pathetic

* *Act. 9. 5.* Expression: * *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?*

If we do consider all the Circumstances of his Passion, we shall be convinced that upon the Cross, which was a most cruel and lingering kind of Death, he hath shewn as much Constancy, Patience, and Greatness of Courage, as any other Martyr. The comforting Words of the Angel, who did, no doubt, set before him the Glory which was to follow his Sufferings, the Greatness of the Truth he maintained, and the Benefit which Mankind should receive by it, made him look upon Death afterwards as boldly, as he appeared fearful at first.

There is nothing to be seen then in the Design of this great Event, but what is most worthy God, and his infinite Wisdom, together with all the rest of his Perfections; and what is more in the Execution of it, nothing can fully the Brightness and Glory of *Christ's* Patience and Constancy. God hath shewn us here whatever could be expected of his infinite Mercy, and our Saviour whatever the most fervent Charity could prompt him to.

The Conclusion of the First Part.

Hitherto we have given as plain an Account of *Christ's* Death as we could; we have set down in their Order the true Reasons of it, and spoken of its admirable Effects upon Mens Minds. We have set forth both the great Value God hath set on it, and the Greatness of *Christ's* Reward. The right Knowledge of such a wonderful Design, is more than sufficient, to convince all considering Men, that Christian Religion cannot but be the Work of God.

I could put an end here to this Discourse, wherein I have treated of *Christ's* Death with all the clearness and simplicity of the Gospel; but having to do with Persons who rather study to raise new Difficulties, than to examine Proofs, and with whom a seeming Objection takes more than a solid Reason; this very Consideration will oblige me to answer in the Second Part, all the Deists Objections, and to shew, that *Christ's* Death hath so many Characters of Divinity, so many Marks of an infinite Wisdom in it, that one must be forced to own, that it is one of the strongest Proofs of his Sincerity, and consequently one of the greatest Foundations of the Gospel.

SECOND

SECOND PART.

God's Wisdom, in *Christ's* Death, vindicated against the *DEISTS*.

CHAP. I.

An Answer to the great Objection of the Deists.

After all that hath been said concerning *Christ's* Death, and the Glory attending it, there is nothing so easy as to Answer the *Deists* great Objection already mentioned, to vindicate God's Action in the giving up a Just and Innocent Person to Death, from all Aspersions either of Cruelty, or Injustice; and further to show, that God in all these, hath neither wanted Goodness, nor injured his Wisdom.

To be convinced of this, we must consider *Christ's* Death as a Trial, which God made him undergo, that he might have an occasion afforded him by his Obedience, to raise him to the highest pitch of Greatness a Man can attain to. It was a short Trial attended with an Eternal Glory; and what is more, *Christ* was not forced to it, he was pleased with the condition God proposes to him, and accepted of it, to obtain the Empire of the World. * *Who for the joy that* Heb. 12.2. *was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the Throne of God.*

Had God given him up to the most cruel Death of the Cross, out of his Absolute Power, had he not so worthily recompensed him, and had *Jesus* suffered unwillingly, it might be said indeed, that God had been wanting to his Goodness, and would have dealt with him more like a Master, than like a Father; but the manner in which he hath rewarded his Sufferings, places his Goodness above the malice of the World.

Who is the Man, how Just soever he is, who would not willingly undergo such a Trial, were it to be rewarded only with that Happiness, which God reserves in common to all the Faithful? If there be no body, but would be overjoyed to suffer on this condition, and would not think God cruel towards him, had he exposed him to Death for reasons of lesser moment than those which brought *Christ* to his Trial, must we then charge God with cruelty towards his Son? If we cannot, without violating all Rules of Right and Equity, we ought much less to upbraid him with Injustice.

This is a Maxim, which hath met with a general reception, That *volenti non fit injuria*. That is, An injury is not done to one that is willing to receive it.

Christ's

Christ's Death was not forced upon him, he suffers with a willing mind, which clearly evinces that God is no more unjust to him, than a King would be, who should permit the Death of one of his Subjects, who would generously lose his Life for his Country. How hard soever the condition was which was proposed to *Christ*, he agrees to it, and willingly gives himself up to Death. The greatness of the Glory which attended him, prevails against all the torments and horrors of Death, he undergoes it freely. † *I have power, says he, to lay down my life, no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of my self.* Where is any Injustice to be seen here? There is not so much as any shadow of it, since *Christ* convinced of the great reasons of God, and satisfied with the recompence proposed, voluntarily underwent such a Trial.

† *Jahn* 10.
18.

But if the Wisdom of God, a Deist will say, could find some other way to save Mankind, why did he expose, without any necessity, to such a bitter Death, Innocency or Vertue it self?

I am not so rash, as some Divines are, as to affirm God had no other way to save the World, I have too high Ideas, or Thoughts, of his Infinite Wisdom, to dare to limit it. God, no doubt, could have taken some other course if he pleased, to reveal the great Truths *Christ* hath brought to light; he could have convinced Men of them by other means. If we reflect upon God's Wisdom, we may suppose him to have more ways than one of effecting a design, since Wisdom consists in the choice of the best and fittest means to attain an end, when there are more ways than one of doing it.

If God's Wisdom did appear in the Gospel-dispensation, it must needs be, that out of many ways he had before him, he had foreseen this to be the fittest to produce the designed effect. There were other means, but since God hath made no choice of them, we must either doubt of his Wisdom, or believe this to be the best, since God pitched upon it: If it was the best, he ought necessarily to make choice of it, and that for a reason beyond all exception. When God's Wisdom hath once considered the ways how to perform a design, he must necessarily chuse the fittest to attain his end; otherwise it would be a want of Wisdom to understand the best, and take the worst.

God found nothing better to convince Mankind of the Truth of another Life, than *Christ's* Death, and Resurrection; his Wisdom seeing no powerfuller motives to Holiness, than the hope of an Eternal Life grounded upon such proofs, he makes choice of them, notwithstanding the great obstacle which lay in his way, that is, the death of a just Man. This obstacle was either to be removed, or God's design to be laid aside: The wisest of all means was either needless, or an innocent Person was to die, which is repugnant both to God's Justice and Goodness.

What hath God done to take this obstacle out of the way? He proposed so great a Reward for those few hours of Sufferings, that he made *Christ* yield willingly to them; by that means without violating either of these two Perfections, tho' he gave up to Death Innocency it self, he made a way both for his Wisdom and Mercy; and demonstrated how dear Mankind's Salvation was to him, since to procure it his Fatherly tenderness suffered so much.

This

This consideration takes away the strength of the Objection, and clearly proves that tho' God could have used other ways, yet he hath done nothing, but what is most Wise in the choice of this, tho' never so amazing a way, since it is the best; and he hath committed no Injustice, since he hath removed the obstacle which lay in his way, in so advantageous a manner for *Christ*, who willingly underwent the Death of the Cross.

This evinces plainly, how unreasonable it is to charge God with Cruelty, since he hath taken away so Wisely, and so Gloriously, the only and great difficulty, which could put a stop to the Execution of his design.

CH A P. II.

An Objection taken out of the Martyrdom of the Atheist Vanini, Answered.

IF there are any Men so rash as to undertake to turn God himself out of his Throne, by denying his Existence, we must not wonder if some call the Gospel in question, for want of knowing the design of it, and insist more on a seeming difficulty, than on the strength of its proofs.

When we offer the Cross in this notion of Martyrdom to a *Deist's* consideration, he tells us presently, if Atheism had its Martyrs, as one *Cæsar Vanini*, who ventured to lay down his Life for such an unreasonable Opinion, to show the strength of his Courage, how can we ground or rely upon *Christ's* Martyrdom? The Interests they have are both alike; that is, none at all, they both die, one to maintain that he comes from God to reveal another Life, and the other to affirm there is no God, and that all Religion is but a Cheat; which of the two must we believe, says the *Deist*, since they both give the same proof?

To show the Martyrdom of the Atheist, cannot lessen the strength of *Christ's*; we shall make these four considerations.

1. We must observe that *Vanini*, not knowing how to reconcile the Existence of God with the Cheats and Cruelties, for which Religion was made a pretence, fell insensibly into Atheism. He thought that Religion was but a politick Trick; upon this thought, he examin'd the Gospel only to find out some Humane consideration in its Author, as Ambition, Interest, or the like: But finding none of these, he was so surpris'd, and so puzzled, that he thought more than once which Party to adhere to; since he confessed himself, that nothing had put him to so great a stand as that. One may conjecture from this Confession, that to decline the strength, and force he met within the Gospel, which destroyed the foundation, upon which he denied the Existence of God, he thought he could take no better course, than to show the like courage himself, and the contempt of his Life, as *Christ* did: Therefore he makes a resolution to die Martyr for Atheism, that he might satisfy himself, that one may suffer Death out of meer Courage. In the Gospel he found a Religion established, without any shew of Humane Interest, and consequently his greatest reason against the Existence of a God was destroyed by this means; upon this he faces Death, to convince himself that one might die out of pure Courage, when a witnessing to the Truth does not force him to it.

2. If

2. If this conjecture, drawn out of his own Confession, be not true, we may say that this Atheist either died without any design; or, if it were true, that he had a mind to destroy the Existence of a God in the Minds of Men, he is guilty of a very absurd and foolish action. He deprives himself of Life, which, according to his own Principle, is Mans chiefest Good, and receives no advantage by it; it is a miserable and wretched folly to lose all, and be no gainer. Besides, what good could his Death do to Men? If once they could be persuaded that there is neither God, Heaven, or Hell, what broad passage would it not lay open to Vice? for the persuasion of a God is a curb or restraint to many. 'Tis the greatest Injustice in the World, to go about to destroy Religion for the abuse which is made of it. We must hear what *Christ* says, to be convinced, That if Sincerity and Charity bear not the sway among Christians, their Interest alone is the spring of their Cheat, their Pride the cause of their Cruelty, and the Zeal they show to God is nothing but a pretence. If all the motives the Gospel sets before us, cannot take with the greatest part of Men, can we believe that Atheism would be more able to render Men Just and Charitable?

These considerations evince plainly, that on what side soever you behold *Vanini* his action, you will find it a most wretched and unaccountable one. Can they say that *Vanini*'s Death was upon either of these Accounts, for the vindicating of the Truth, or the glory of undeceiving Men? But are these sufficient inducements to make an Atheist out of Love with Life? They will say, no doubt, that he had a mind to signalize himself for his Valour, and Constancy to his Tenets, as they falsely pretend *Christ* did: But what strange way is this of making one self famous? By such an action *Vanini* did just like *Erostratus*, who burned the Temple of *Diana* to make himself talk'd of. What a senseless course did he take by denying the Existence of his God, to get himself a Reputation? Such boldness is not worth our Esteem or Admiration; but rather ought to be look'd upon as the greatest Infamy and Disgrace.

Let us now consider the design of *Christ*'s Death, as we have before represented it; is there any thing more Heroick? He dies to make all the World know God, and render the glory due to him; he suffers to confirm the Truth of another Life, to set up Vertue, and extirpate Vice.

Can one compare the end of these two Martyrdoms without wondering, that they would make the greatest piece of Folly serve to invalidate the wisest of all designs? The Atheist suffers for a manifest falshood; the Deist, who believes the Existence of a God, agrees with us in that; whereas *Christ* suffers to make God known to us in the full extent of all his Perfections. *Vanini* resists an opinion generally received among Men, our Saviour does not singularize himself so; he proposes nothing new to the World, for the *Jews* did believe the same God, and the same eternal Life: He tells them only, that he comes from God to give them assurances of that Life, and to show them the terms on which it was to be obtained. They treat him as an Impostor, he dies to maintain the contrary, and that he is truly sent; what therefore hath his Death common in it, with that of the Atheist, who died to maintain that there is no Deity?

Besides, the inconsistency *Vanini* shewed at the Bar, eclipses all the Glory they fix

fix upon that Action ; he denied, and confessed by Turns, the Existence of God ; he took, when he was before his Judges, a Straw from the Ground, and said, *All things, so this very Straw, prove the Existence of a Deity.* Christ was not thus inconstant, but always maintained the same thing with an undaunted Courage.

3. The Atheist dies for an Opinion : He could not reconcile Providence with the Actions of Men, in matter of Religion : This Difficulty was a Cloud which hid from his Eyes the great Light of Providence. *Christ*, to the contrary, dies for Matter of Fact, whose Certainty he was well assur'd of ; he maintains that he hath receiv'd such an Order from the Supreme Being, his Senses, his Reason, the Gift of Miracles he was endowed with, did convince him of it. Had he suffered Death for an Opinion, one might believe he did it out of shew of Courage ; whereas that dying for Matter of Fact, there was no likelihood he would lose his Life, had he not been fully perswaded of it. If he died, as *Vanini*, falsely pretends to shew his Courage, there is no Reason why he should pretend to die for another end ; he had robbed himself of the Glory of his Sufferings, by concealing the true Design of his Death, and instead of receiving our Esteem for his Courage and Bravery, the Cheat being once discovered, he would have been accounted a grand Impostor.

4. The Example of the Atheist, is the only Example they can give: But the Christian Religion is founded upon the Death of many Martyrs ; *Christ* first broke the Ice, and his Disciples, plain, undesigning, and illiterate Men, bravely trod in the Steps of their Master.

Had *Christ* chosen a Company of *Stoick* Philosophers, to make them lay down their Lives for the Truth of his Resurrection, one might believe they had suffer'd for their Doctrine, out of pure Courage, or Obstinacy in their Opinions. The World hath produced such Fools, who, to shew how they slighted Pain, threw themselves into the Flames with a surprising Constancy, as *Lucian* somewhere tells us. The number of such Martyrs had made but little Impression upon Men already prepossessed, that it was nothing but a vain-glorious Folly in them.

The choice *Christ* made of poor illiterate Fishermen, on whom sensible things made more impression, than the Glory of being accounted courageous, shews plainly, that if they suffered Martyrdom, the Evidence of the Truth alone forced them to it.

Is it not an irrational thing to believe, that *Christ* and his Apostles, educated with so great simplicity, could have been so well taught in *Stoick* Philosophy, and arrive at so great a height of it ? The Recompence *Christ* expected for his Sufferings, and the Promise he made to his Disciples for theirs, manifest, that they looked upon Pain as a real Evil, and that they were very far from the Sense of the School of *Zeno*.

From hence we may conclude, that the Evidence of the Truth alone, made them undergo Death, and that their Martyrdoms were as great Testimonies as Men can give for their Sincerity, which shew by the Atheists own confession, that they were most undesigning, and disinterested Men,

C H A P. III.

An Objection taken from the Martyrs of false Religions answered.

THERE is nothing more common than this Objection with the Deists: If there have been Persons, say they, who have suffered for their Religion, tho' never so false, ye must not insist so much upon the Death of *Christ*, to prove the Truth of his Doctrine. This Proof is equivocal, since it proves indifferently Falshood and Truth; a Proof that is to convince Men, must not serve to maintain an Imposture: If a *Mahomedan* dies for his Religion, with as much Courage as a Christian for the Gospel, how can we discern the Truth, when we see the same kind of Proof on both sides?

To shew that this Objection does not weaken the strength of the Proof *Christ* hath given us by his Martyrdom, we must observe these three Things.

1. That we must not look upon the Death of Christians, who have suffered after the Age of the Apostles, as a Proof of their Religion; it was indeed, a most heroick Action in them; but 'tis not a Martyrdom properly speaking; because they have been Witnesses to nothing they could testify: They only gave out, that they had received their Religion from their Fathers, who received it themselves from their Ancestors, and so from Tradition to Tradition, we must have recourse to the first Origine, and examine the Proofs on which depends the Truth of our Religion.

We must not look to the Proof of the Sufferings of a Man who dies for his Religion, but to the Proofs which the Authors of it gave. This is the standing Rule by which we must judge of a Martyrdom: Otherwise, if suffering for a Religion were a Proof of its Truth, all Religions in the World, tho' never so opposite, would be true; for there is no Religion but can boast of its Martyrs, and consequently will set up for the true, if such Proofs would do.

The Martyrdom then of modern Christians is not a Proof of their Religion, but only the Martyrdom of the Founders of it. The Reason is evident: Because none but they that have seen the thing, are able to give an undeniable Testimony of it.

2. We must consider, that there is a great Difference between dying for a Matter of Fact, of which we have been Eye-witnesses, and suffering for a Religion which we hold upon the Hearsays and Prejudices of Childhood. The Deists confound these two Things, and pretend, that Martyrdom cannot be a Proof of the Gospel, since it proves indifferently Truth, and Falshood. In this difference, however lies the strength of our Arguing; we maintain, that nothing is a sufficient Proof of a Religion, but the Martyrdom of the first Founders of it:

Because

Because they suffer for Things of which they have been Witnesses, and 'tis impossible they should be mistaken in it.

A Man of good Sense may be imposed upon in Matters of Opinion ; and he may be perswaded so far, as to lose even his Life for the maintaining of his Error, which he mistakes for the Truth, if there be People barbarous enough to take it from him. A *Turk*, no doubt, will face Death with as much Courage for the Law of his Prophet, as a Christian would for the Doctrine of his Saviour: The *Mahometan* believes he suffers for a Truth ; for no Body would be so hardy as to die for a known Falshood : He is mistaken, but 'tis in Opinions, and not in Matters of Fact ; in which last 'tis as hard to deceive ones self, as 'tis easie to do it in the other. Sophistry, and false Reasoning, may perswade our Minds ; but nothing but what is sensible and real can make impression upon our Senses. The greatest Eloquence can never perswade a Man, that is but the least befriended with Reason, that he hath seen a thing which he never did. One might corrupt him indeed, to dissemble for human Interest ; but one can never fully perswade him of it, and much less to suffer Death on its behalf.

From hence we may gather, that a Man may die for a Religion, tho never so false ; because he takes it for a Truth : But a Man will not die to maintain a manifest Falshood. unless he be quite forsaken of all Reason. There is nothing therefore more unreasonable, than to conclude, that we must not ground upon the Martyrdom of those, who have been Eye-witnesses to a thing, because some have died for a false Opinion.

God in his Wisdom so ordered it, that the Proofs of the Christian Religion, should be for the most part Matters of Fact, of which the Witnesses ought to be sufficiently perswaded, without the least fear of Imposition ; to the end they might be the less exposed to contest and scruple. These Proofs depend upon the Miracles, the Death, and Resurrection of *Christ*. The Apostles have been constant Witnesses to all these ; had not their Sense convinced them, all the Reasoning in the World could not have done it.

The Example of *Thomas*, who would credit no Testimony, but that of his Eyes, proves, that when one hath strong Reasons for doubting, a bare Testimony is not enough to perswade. Had the Apostles not been convinc'd by their Senses of *Christ's* Resurrection, nothing could have perswaded them, but the same Proofs they gave to others. If they have suffered Death for witnessing *Christ's* Resurrection, as *Christ* suffered it, to maintain he was come from God, 'tis an evident Proof they have been true Witnesses of it. No Body can call in question this Truth, without believing them the veriest Mad-men that ever lived.

3. We must observe another thing, which contributes much to the strengthening of their Proof : That it was so peculiar to *Christ*, and his Apostles, that it was never observed in the Author of any other Religion. For neither *Numa Pompilius*, nor *Mahomet*, suffered Death for maintaining ; the one, that he had received his Laws from the Nymph *Egeria* ; and the other, that the Holy Ghost, in the shape of a Dove, had dictated to him the *Alcoran* : Nor did the Disciples

of *Mahomet* die, to averr, that they had been Eye-witnesses of his pretended Miracles. 'Tis no Argument, to see a *Mahometan* die at this time a Day for his Religion, his Death cannot be a Proof of it; the Authors of the *Alcoran* should have suffered, as did those of the Gospel.

A Religion which gets ground by the slaughter of its Enemies, seems to be a subtle Policy, rather than a Truth. The blind Submission *Mahomet* requires to his Laws, and those of his Successors, plainly evinces, that his own Interest, rather than the Salvation of others, was the Hinge of all his Actions.

The Christian Religion contains nothing like it; *Christ* is so far from requiring a blind Obedience, that he exhorts us to examine his Doctrine, and gives us a
 • *Joh. 5. 39.* Rule to judge of it: * *Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal Life, and they are they which testify of me.* And instead of destroying his Opposers, the Enemies of his Gospel, he gives his Followers express Commands to love them, and do them all manner of Kindnesses, *Mat. 5. 44.* He gives his Life for them, *Rom. 5. 10.* and exhorts his Disciples to do the same; who did it accordingly. They gave the dearest thing they had: If a Man can give a stronger Proof of his Sincerity, let it be made known to us, and we shall insist no longer on this.

One may judge after these Observations, that of these two opposite manners of setting up a Religion, the one is only human and politick, but the other divine and heavenly; and consequently, that the Martyrdom of the Founders of the Gospel, is so undeniable a Proof of its Truth, as nothing can weaken it.

C H A P. IV.

Of the Characters of Divinity in the Death of Christ, of the Newness of this Design, and of its Prediction.

BY opposing the Religion of *Mahomet* to that of *Christ*, we have concluded, that the Christian Religion contains nothing but what is great and divine: Which Truth will appear in all its clearness, if we make a few Observations upon the excellent Marks of Divinity contained in *Christ's* Death. One cannot cast his Eyes upon the Newness of this Design, the Prediction God made of it, the great Wisdom which shines forth in it, the swiftness of its progress, and its duration, without being convinced that this is the Work of God.

*The first
Mark of
Divinity.*

1. The Newness of this Design shews clearly, that none but God could be the Author of it. Men would have taken another Course; for the Vanity and Weakness of their Understanding, had hindered them from laying the Foundation of it upon a Death so ignominious as that of the Cross. They had never acknowledged a Man for their Master, dealt with as the worst of Slaves. The Scandal the *Jews* take at it, and the Folly the *Greeks* charges it withal, are so far from

from injuring of it, that they evidently shew, that God alone hath found out this Design, and executed it to his Glory, and to the astonishment of all the World.

He declared to us by his Prophet, * *That his ways and his thoughts are not ours* : * *Isa. 55. 8.*
That the World might expect some wonderful thing at the manifestation of the Gospel. God speaks thus, after he had given the great Prediction of our Saviour, at the fourth and fifth Verses of this same Chapter : *Behold I have given him for a Witness to the People, a Leader and Commander to the People. Byhold, thou shalt call a Nation that thou knowest not, and Nations that knew not thee, shall run unto thee ; because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel : For he hath glorified thee.* Christ is the Witness here spoken of, who by his Death hath confirmed the Gospel, and drawn all Men unto him.

St. Paul had thoroughly weighed the Excellency of this Design, he understood too well all the Wisdom contained in it, to believe that Man could have so much as thought of it. After he had told the *Corinthians*, that he would know nothing among them, save Christ, and him crucified, he tells them, That * *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have entered into the Heart of Man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.* Christ's Death did so far surpass all human Expectation, that even after God had published it, he declares, * *That the natural Man cannot receive it, for it was foolishness unto him.* † *I Cor. 2. 9.* † *Ibid. v. 14.*

When a Man considers the Causes of Mens Actions, 'tis hard to conceive, they could have had Thoughts and Courage, to found a Religion at the cost of their Lives. Where is the Man, who could gain to himself Profelytes, with promising no other Recompence but Crosses and Misery ? Flesh and Blood cannot endure that ; Mahomet did not attract Followers by this means : Men are too fond of Life, and its Pleasures, to forsake them, unless the Truth compels them to it.

If the *Jews*, from whom we have received the Gospel, had themselves been sole Authors of it, and published it of their own Heads, we should have had quite another thing. Let a Man examine the thing impartially, and tell us, Whether it be likely, that while the *Jews* did expect a triumphing Messiah, some of them had been so bold as to propose, instead of a Conquerour, and a potent King, a Man of Sorrows, acquainted with Griefs, poor, and at last expiring upon a Cross ? Was not this an Object as far from the Ideas they had of him, as Heaven is from Earth ? We must then draw this wise and true Conclusion, that the Apostles had never preached up the Cross, if the Energy of the Truth had not freed them of their National Prejudices.

St. Peter, who was the first Preacher of it, never dream'd before that time, that it was to be a great Foundation of the Gospel. When Christ told his Disciples, that he was to be put to Death, || *he began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord : This shall not be unto thee.* The smart Reply of Christ to him, shews, that his false Pity undermined the Foundation of the Gospel : * *Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an Offence unto me : For thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of Men.* This proves, that bare Humanity had no part in this ; which is a thing so much beyond all Human Apprehension, as it forbids us to believe it was Mens Conscience.

The

1 Pet. I. 12.

The Cross is so astonishing, that it makes the Angels themselves to wonder at God's Wisdom, which displays it self in so great Splendour, as they are never weary of looking into it, as says St. Peter, speaking of *Christ's* Sufferings, and the Glory attending them. If the Angels themselves admire these things, it follows they must be new to them, and are the Work of a more perfect Intelligence than theirs. Who, but the Supreme God, is able by the Greatness of his Wonders to yield admiration to those heavenly Spirits? Who, but he, can offer them Objects worthy their Contemplation?

The Cross, I do own, hath been a *Scandal* to some, and *Folly* to others; yet from hence we draw a Proof of its Divinity, since notwithstanding these two Obstacles, it hath been the Power of God for Salvation to all Believers, and caused admiration in all those which have fathomed the Wisdom of its Reasons.

We must then be convinced, that since the Cross hath been so much gain-said, and yet hath born up so well against its Opposers, it must necessarily be the Work of God. What likelihood was there, that any Man should be found so hardy, as to set up a Religion upon a Foundation, which all Men both despise and abhor?

The Second Mark.

2. We must observe, that how new and surprising soever this Event be, yet it was not fortuitous, or unforeseen. *Christ*, according to the Scriptures, was the Lamb slain before the Foundation of the World. His Death had been foretold by many Prophecies, whereby God insensibly prepared the Minds of Men for such an astonishing thing. This being his Master-piece, he hath given our more Predictions of that, than of any of the rest of admirable Events, which were to happen under the Gospel; and what is more, he hath delineated it in such a lively and circumstantiated manner, that no Body can miss of applying it to *Christ*.

God foreseeing the thing would be extraordinary, makes it known long before, that when it should be made manifest, Men might yield their Belief more easily to a thing foretold in so express a manner.

Here is another part of Providence to be considered in the most eminent of these Prophecies; which is, that they could not bear a literal Sence, nor have an accomplishment in the time of the Prophets, as the most part of all other Predictions, which point at the *Messiah*.

God foreseeing the Scandal the *Jews* would take at *Christ's* Death, not only acquaints them with it: *I lay in Zion a Stumbling-stone, and Rock of Offence*: But he did endeavour to hinder them from being offended at it, by foretelling them clearly the Design of *Christ's* Death, its Circumstances, the Consequences of it, together with the Reward attending it.

One cannot but pity the *Jews*, when one sees the Pains they take to explain the 53d Chapter of *Isaiah*, to relate only to *Isaiah*, or *Jeremiah*; the curious Strokes, by which the Holy Ghost hath delineated our Saviour, are too lively and noble to serve for any other. The Death of *Isaiah* was so far from being an Oblation for Sin, that it was one of the Causes of their Ruin.

Moreover,

Moreover, is there any probability, that the Imprisonment of *Jeremiah*, a thing very common among the *Jews*, who used to deal so with their Prophets, should be foretold in so pathetick a manner. One may find some Similitudes, but so few, that they cannot make a sufficient Proof to perswade us, that the Holy Ghost intended to speak of him.

Abarbanel, a very learned *Jew*, hath confessed ingenuously, that one cannot with the least Shadow of Reason, expound any Verse of this Chapter, by applying it to that Prophet.

The Prediction in the Ninth Chapter of *Daniel*, points out the coming of the *Messiah*, his Death, and the two great Effects of it, *viz.* the abolishing and propitiating of Sin, too positively to be applied to any other: * *Seventy Weeks* * *Dan 9.24.* are determined upon thy People, and upon thy holy City, to finish the Transgressions, and to make an end of Sins, and to make reconciliation for Iniquity, and that by the Ver. 26. cutting of, or death of the *Messiah*.

No more can that place in the 22d *Psalms* be applied to *David*, but after a figurative, or I may say, very far-stretched manner. The Holy Ghost hath described the Authors of *Christ's* Death, the Kind of it, and the Circumstance, with so lively Colours, that 'tis impossible not to see the literal fulfilling of them in *Christ* dying upon *Calvary*: * *The Assembly of the Wicked have inclosed me,* * *Psal. 22.* *they pierced my Hands and my Feet; they look and stare upon me; they part my* ^{16, 17, 18.} *Garments among them, and cast lots upon my Vesture.*

One cannot affirm the same of these Predictions, as of the *Sybilin* Oracles, and say, they were made after the things were come to pass. The *Jews*, who were the Christians greatest Enemies, were the first Receivers of God's Predictions, and have them by them to this Day. God had a peculiar care of their preservation for many Ages, that they might justify them to be true Prophecies, against those which should call in question the Testimony of Christians, who maintain out of them, that *Christ* ought to suffer, and his Death to be the main Design of God.

C H A P. V.

Of the Wisdom of God, or Reflexions upon the Undesigningness of the Author of the Gospel.

THE wise Contrivance of a Design appears, when the same Action serves to many Ends, which answer exactly the Author's Intention. The Cross of *Christ*, as we have shewn, persuades Men of the Truth of another Life, affords God the opportunity of demonstrating in *Christ's* Person the Truth of the Resurrection, encourages his Disciples to suffer for the same Cause, and offers Mankind a powerful Motive to Holiness.

Every Lincament shews the heavenly Hand that framed it, and all of them together, do fully satisfy us, that none but the most accurate Hand of a most wise and infinite Being, could have portrayed such upon the Cross. It must be he who can create Light out of Darkness, who could turn Infamy into Glory; it must be, I say, God, who could make so base a Punishment serve to so Noble and so Great Ends. Can one believe, that so great a Design can be a Work of Falshood? And that Imposture, which from its beginning hath such mean and interested Prospects, should have for its End, Things so glorious, and so worthy of admiration?

*The Third
Mark.*

3. Besides these wonderful Ends, there is yet another Reason, which discovers the full Extent of God's Wisdom in the Dispensation of the Gospel, and sets it above the Subtlety and Censures of the Devils. God was pleased to found the Gospel upon the Death of its Authors, that we should not attribute its Establishment to Humane Prospects of Advantages. He hath removed all Occasions of Incredulity, and profane Scoffings of Men, and wisely taken another way to reveal the Gospel, different from that by which the Law was delivered, that none might object to *Christ*, what he foresaw would be objected to *Moses*.

The Lawgiver of the *Jews*, the Devils say, was a skilful Politician, *Pharaoh's* Court, wherein he was brought up, had too well acquainted him with those Arts. The Design of aggrandising his Family, made him take up the Cloak of Religion; during his Life he retained the Supreme Power, and gave to his Brother the Priesthood, which was the greatest Employment of the State, and procures to the rest of his Family, the best of the Country; that is, the Tithe of all, without any trouble to themselves. It was the *Jews* Interest, say they, to suffer themselves to be deceived: Because it was an Honour to their Nation, to publish, That God had revealed himself to them in so glorious a manner, while he had left all the rest of the World in Darkness.

I do

I do not pretend to refute here, the Malice and Impiety of this way of Reasoning, 'tis not the Design of this Tract: This is a thing already done by learned Men, and I will refer the Reader to the admirable Reflexions of the most learned Dr. *Alix*, upon the Five Books of *Moses*, to prove the Truth of the Christian Religion; wherein he answers in a most profound manner, all those kinds of Objections. All that we have to add, is, that such Objections cannot be made against the first Promulgers of the Gospel.

The face of things is here quite changed, and God deprives Impiety of all Power to do hurt. *Christ*, far from obtaining any greatness upon the Earth, despises it; he hid himself, when they were about to make him a King; he hath neither Riches, nor Temporal Employments, to bestow upon his Disciples: On the contrary, he promises nothing but Crosses, and Persecutions in this World. This is the Glory he prepares for his Followers: *If any one will come after me, let him take up his Cross, and follow me.* What Design of Interest can they challenge him with? He loses his Life for the Truth, and requires his Followers to do the same. Where are here any carnal Designs? where lies the Policy of it?

Had *Christ* been Master of much Riches in this World, had he enjoyed his Greatness, had he sought as *Mahomet* did, to maintain his Undertaking, and placed his Religion on the Pommel of his Sword; had he establish'd a Hierarchy like that of the *Roman* Church, had he given to his Apostles an Absolute Power over Kings, and Kingdoms of the Earth, and the Authority of absolving Subjects from their Oath of Allegiance; had he commanded them blindly to follow his Doctrine, and set up a Tribunal of Inquisition, to punish Rebels and Unbelievers; half an Eye might see, that his Religion was the Work of a Man, and that an immoderate Ambition, rather than the Love of Truth, was the chief Inducement to his Actions.

The greatest Mark of Sincerity a Man can give, is the Undesigningness of his Actions; for when a Man sees the Author of a Religion, neither attending to the raising of his Fortune, nor that of his Followers; when his Design can be suspected of no Humane Interest, then one may reasonably think favourably of such a Doctrine. But when one observes, how far *Christ*, and his Apostles were from being interested, when one sees them expose themselves to the Hatred of the chief of their Nation, and to the Rage of a blind Rabble, and quit even their Lives, rather than to forsake their Doctrine; 'tis a convincing Proof, that the force of the Truth was the only thing that put them upon it.

There is not 'then the least shadow of Human Project or Design, to be found in the Authors of the Gospel: *Vanini*, that infamous Atheist, was forced to own thus much. "One cannot object here, that they had a Mind to get themselves a Name. What new way of Glory is this, to suffer such shameful Deaths, as rendered them most vile and contemptible in the Eyes of all Men? Can any one imagine they suffered willingly to maintain an Imposture? But can it enter any Man's Thoughts, that *Christ*, whose Conduct was so prudent, and Institution so holy, had done a thing which the worst of Men would not dare to commit? We must then conclude, that his Death fully comes up to the rest of his

Life, and own it an Action of Sincerity, and Courage truly heroick, which made him look upon Truth as a thing dearer than his Life.

The same might be affirmed of the Apostles: Is it likely, that poor Fishermen had forsook their Nets, and infamous Publicans their Office, to go and publish a manifest Falshood, and maintain it at so dear a rate as the loss of their Lives? We must all agree, that their own Senses had well satisfied them of the Truth of *Christ's* Resurrection; and consequently, that there is nothing more certain than their Testimony of it.

These Reflections might be enough to convince any considering Persons, that Christian Religion is truly the great Work of the Deity. Men being to be persuaded of the Certainty of another Life, God could effect it no better way, than by making the first Founders of the Gospel Martyrs for it.

Such management could not fail of taking with Men, who are naturally incredulous, and inclined to judge of other Men by themselves. The Cheats which interested Men had vented in Religion, had too much augmented the Incredulity of others; Priests in all times gained no small advantage from the Weakness, and credulous Superstition of Men: The manner of Idolatry's first Rise, and afterwards its Entertainment in the World, argues it to be nothing but Human Contrivance, hence it is, that Men of Reason stand so much upon their Guard, and prove such *Scepticks*: Therefore something opposite to these Delusions was necessary to convince them.

The place that most required the Cross to be erected on, was the Theater of Idolaters Imposture; the Priests of false Gods did notoriously abuse the Simplicity of the People: their Temples eccho'd forth nothing but false Oracles, which Covetousness and Fraud had suggested: These things were the cause, why the infinitely wise God founded Christianity on the Death of its Authors; he made them lay down their Lives, the chiefest of all worldly Goods, that their Undesigningness might vindicate them from all Suspicion of Imposture. God takes contrary Methods to the Asserters of Idolatry, to demonstrate the Divinity and Excellency of his Religion. When a Man goes beyond another, Interest is his only Aim: But when he acts for the Truth, he disregards his own Interests, preferring it to all things, even to his own Life; this is very well known to all Men: Hence it is, that God takes from the Authors of the Gospel, all prospect of worldly Advantage.

One must be but little befriended by Reason, to ascribe to mean and low Foresights, a Work established on the loss of one's Life. He is wilfully blind, that sees not here the Finger of God, and the Depth of his Wisdom.

This is so astonishing, great, and wise an Undertaking, that we cannot but acknowledge it the Work of God himself; for if we consider its Cause, Effects, and Manner of its Execution, there is nothing in all these, but is worthy of its Author, and the fairest Characters of a Divinity are so easily spied in it, that we can by no means suspect it to be the Work of a Mortal.

C H A P. VI.

Of the swift Progress of the Gospel, and continued Duration of it.

THE Saviour of the World well knew the Effect his Death would have upon Men, or the Strength of the Proof of his Martyrdom : * *If I be lifted up from the Earth, I will draw all Men unto me.* *This Jesus said, signifying what Death he should die.* The swift progress of the Cross, shewed the exact accomplishment of this Prophecy. How great Persecutions did the Apostles meet with from the Rage of the *Jews* and Heathens, equally interested to oppose a Religion, which could not be establish'd, but upon the Ruins of theirs : Notwithstanding this, the Cross flourished every-where, it triumphed over the Law, and Idolatry, at such a Time, and in such Places, where it could be least expected.

The Fourth Mark.
* *If I be lifted up* * *John. 12.*
12, 33.

The Authors of the Christian Religion, did not appear in a rude and unpolished Age ; *Christ* was born in the Age of *Augustus Caesar*, and crucified under the Reign of *Tiberius* ; and when the *Sun of Righteousness* first shone forth, *Rome* was in its Splendour, and could boast of the most exact Politeness ; and *Athens*, at the same time, was the Mother of Sciences : These places the Apostles chose to found forth the Gospel in. They pitched upon no By-places, the most famous Cities both in the East and West, were the Theaters from whence they published their Doctrine, and made such Progresses in them, as to establish in most of the Heathen Cities, very large and flourishing Churches.

In the Second Century, *Tertullian* observes; in his Apology, an Authentick Writing, that the Number of Christians was so great, that they filled the Armies, the Cities, the Palace, and even the Senate it self.

Were the Christian Religion an Imposture, how can we conceive it could make such Progresses ? What we find reported of the Miracles and Sufferings of the Apostles, must necessarily be true, considering the speedy Effect their Testimony had on the Minds of Men.

At this time a Day, if a Number of Fisher-men, pretending to Inspiration, should undertake to set up a new Religion, 'tis very plain, they could not in so enlightened an Age as this is, have any proportionable Progress with that the Apostles had.

The Monks, who, doubtless, are something more subtle than unlearn'd Fisher-men, could not accomplish such a Design, notwithstanding they undertook it in a time of Darkness and Ignorance : The speedy Suppression of their Eternal Gospel, or economy of the Holy Ghost, as they impiously called it, tho' upheld by the potent Order of the *Jacobins*, shews, that Imposture can thrive but very ill, when pursu'd as vigorously as this was, when attacked by the Parliament of *Paris*.

But to bring Examples nearer home : In the Reign of King *Henry* the Third, one procuring five Wounds to be made in his Body, in resemblance to the five Wounds in *Christ's* Body, pretended to be the *Christ*, and had gotten a Woman that took upon her to be the *Virgin Mary* ; who continuing obstinate in their Madneſs, were adjudged to be immured, and ſhut up between two Walls : And there was an end of them.

In Queen *Elizabeth's* Time, *Hacket*, born at *Oundle* in *Northamptonſhire*, a mean Fellow, of no Learning, all on a ſudden, took upon him a ſhew of wonderful Holineſs, did nothing but hear Sermons, and getting Scriptures by Heart, and counterfeiting Revelations from God, and an extraordinary Calling, grew to be magnified by certain zealous Miniſters ; and eſpecially by one *Edward Coppinger*, (a Gentleman of a good Family) and one *Arthington*, that they accounted him as ſent from Heaven, and a greater Prophet than *Moses*, or *John the Baptiſt* ; and finally, that he was *Chriſt* himſelf, come with a Fan in his Hand to judge the World. And this they proclaimed in *Cheapſide*, giving out that *Hacket* participated of *Chriſt's* glorified Body, by his eſpecial Spirit, and was now come to propagate the Goſpel over all *Europe*, and to ſettle a true Diſcipline in the Church of *England*, and that they themſelves were two Prophets, the one of Mercy, and the other of Judgment, with many ſuch incredible Blaſphemies : Whereupon *Hacket* was apprehended, arraigned, and at laſt hanged, drawn, and quartered, continuing all the time, and at his Death, his blaſphemous Assertions. *Coppinger*, a while after, ſtarved himſelf to Death in Priſon: *Arthington* repented, and made his Recantation in a publick Writing. Thus fell their Impoſture.

From hence we may eaſily conclude, That had not the Goſpel been the Work of God, the manner of its propagation had put a ſudden ſtop to it. Other means have been uſed to eſtabliſh Falſhood : For Impoſture commonly owes its Progreſs and Eſtabliſhment only to Force and Violence: When the Authors of it have the Power on their ſide, it cannot be reſiſted and oppoſed, but with evident Danger. 'Tis well known, how *Mahomet* at firſt eſtabliſhed his Religion ; he oppoſed Force againſt Force, and Army againſt Army : The *Alcoran* had not been known in many places, had not the *Creſcent* been firſt ſet up ; and *Conſtantinople* had remained Chriſtian to this Day, had it not been aſſaulted and taken by *Mahomet* the Second.

The Goſpel was not ſettled in the World by ſuch means ; *Chriſt* crucified had obtained an almoſt univerſal Empire in the World, before *Conſtantine* came to the Throne. The Progreſs of the Croſs was not beholding to any earthly Power or Aſſiſtance : For God would not have his Work attributed to an Arm of Fleſh, and the Effect of his Infinite Wiſdom, to the Fortune of War : For this Reaſon he gave the Founders of the Goſpel up to Death, and eſtabliſhed Religion by their Martyrdom, being far from uſing any Violence in the accompliſhing of it ; which plainly ſhews, that the Swiftneſs of its Progreſs, flows only from the Force

of the Truth ; since that which in all probability would be its ruine, serves to the establishing of it.

David plainly foretold this great Event : *The Stone which the Builders refused, is become the Head-stone of the Corner* : And hath been cemented to its place with Blood so firmly, as all the Gates of Hell could not prevail against it. Violence could do no more than erect on this Foundation, many fair Temples to the God of all the World.

The Continuation of the Gospel's Progress, plainly evinces its swift Effect, to be a good Proof of its Truth ; for tho' God out of his just Judgment sometimes permits an Error to prevail, to punish the Contempt of the Truth ; yet his Providence, at one time or other, puts a Period to it, notwithstanding all Violence used to uphold it : Whereas true Religion withstands all the Malice and Rage of Men. They that put *Christ*, and his Apostles to Death, no doubt intended to extinguish their Doctrine with their Lives ; and had not the Cross of the Saviour of the World been a most clear Proof of his Sincerity, it had caused the Ruine of the Gospel ; had not the Apostle's Death convinced Men of the Truth of their Undertaking, their Doctrine had been buried with them long ago. Mark 5.

There is nothing more fatal to Imposture, than the Death of its Authors ; 'tis a Trial it cannot sustain : For who is he, who knowing himself to be imposed upon, would undertake its Defence. The miserable End of so many false *Messiahs*, which appeared before and after the coming of the true, is an evident Proof of what we have said before ; and their sad Fate is more than sufficient to convince all Men of Reason, that since *Christ*, tho' dealt with after the same manner, hath met with better Reception, 'tis an Evidence he was truly sent from God : For had his Gospel been the Work of a Man, it could never have resisted the Violence done against it.

The famous History of the Impostors, *Thudas*, and *Judas of Galilee*, who boasted themselves to be the *Messiah*, had never reached our Ears, had not *Gamaliel*, and *Josephus*, mentioned them, as sad Examples of Imposture. The wise *Dr. Gamaliel* was not ignorant, that Imposture is not able to continue long ; since he tells the *Jews* : * *If thū Counsel, or thū Work be of Men, it will come to nought* : * *Act. 5. 38.* But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it. The Maxim of this great Master 39. proved true ; Providence watched over his Work, and the Duration of the Gospel, is an evident Proof of its Truth ; for God had never concerned himself for its preservation, had it been an Imposture ; witness the Example of *Ben Corba*, who assumed the Name of *Barcozevab* ; that is, the Son of the Star, to make the *Jews* believe he was the Star spoken of by *Balaam*.

This false *Messiah*, seduced so great a Number of the *Jews*, that if Heathen History did not mention it, it had been impossible to believe it ; he made sad havock with this Croud of miserable People, he caused many Christians to deny *Christ*, and put an end to many others, by dismal Tortures. But at last the Emperor *Adrian*, seeing this Mischief get Head, thought it worthy of his Presence, and so appeared at the Head of an Army, fought, and defeated him with such a Victory,

Victory, that the *Jews* were never able to recover. Never had Imposture fairer Beginnings, and swifter Progresses, yet being an Imposture, it came to nothing together with its Author, who drew after him the Ruin of all the Nation.

Let one but consult the History of the Turks, and he will find there the Tragick End of many of these false *Messiahes*, or their shameful turning of their Religion, to the end they might decline the Punishment due to their Imposture.

There was about Six hundreds Years ago, a certain Jew called *El David*, who gave out that he was *Christ*, and drew a great many Profelytes after him ; upon which he was apprehended, and brought before an *Arabian Prince* ; who asked him, *What Miracle he could do, to convince him that he was not an Impostor ? To which he answered, Sir, cut off my Head, and in a little time you shall see me alive again.* Which he said to prevent some greater Torments, which he feared would be inflicted on him, for deluding the People . Whereupon the Prince replied, *A greater Sign than this thou canst not give ; and therefore, if after I have beheaded thee, thou recoverest to Life again both I, and all my People, and all the World, I will acknowledge thee to be a Messenger from God.* And presently he commanded him to be Beheaded, and there was an End of the Cheat ; and so there would doubtless have been of the Christian Religion, if *Christ's* Death had not been the Work of God : For he said to the *Jews*, who required a Proof of his Mission, just as this *El David* said, *Destroy this Temple, and in three Days I will raise it up.* Upon this I stake all the Credit of my Doctrine ; they took him at his Word afterward : Had his Death not been a Proof of his Sincerity, and had he not been raised from the Dead, his Crucifixion had doubtless had the same Destiny, as the Tragick End of so many false *Messiahes*, which hath buried both their Dignity and Undertaking with them.

If the Foundation *Christ* hath laid on his own Blood, remains firm, 'tis because it was built upon the Rock of Ages, that is, upon God's immutable Decree. No Religion was ever so exposed to the Rage of Men, as the Christian ; the Devil never set upon any Undertaking with so great Violence, as he did on this ; yet the Gospel remains. *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.* His Doctrine still enlightens a great part of the World ; the most cruel Persecutions, and the Death of so many Martyrs have but made it thrive the better ; What other Reason can be alledged for its Duration than this ? That it is the Work of God for which he concerns himself in so peculiar a manner.

Heb. 13. 8.

C H A P. VII.

Some Objections against the Duration of the Gospel answered.

IT will doubtless be said, that we must not insist upon the Duration of the Christian Religion, or go about to prove its Truth thereby ; since that of *Mahomet* hath sustained it self for these ten Centuries, notwithstanding it be no more than a Human Contrivance.

We answer, There is a vast Difference between the Establishment of *Mahomet's*, and the Christian Religion ; that at first triumphed by Force of Arms over all the Obstacles he met with ; *Mahomet* got Victories, took Towns, and spread his Religion with his Power : But the Christian Religion was only propagated by the Blood of its Authors ; the Gospel bore the Brunt of earthly Potentates, who left no Stone unturn'd to suffocate it at its Birth ; 'tis from its good success it had under Persecution, that we draw the force of our Proof.

Had *Mahomet's* Religion been at its first beginning exposed to Violence, had its Authors been Martyrs instead of Conquerours, its good Fortune and Continuation might here have been objected with good Reason ; for then Imposture would have had the Glory of withstanding Violence, and suffering Persecution : One cannot with Reason oppose its Duration to that of the Gospel, and by that go about to weaken the force of our Proof, seeing nothing of this Nature ever happened.

'Tis no wonder to see a false Religion live, seeing the Professors of it are not instructed in the true one ; Men of themselves cannot forsake their Errors, unless they have light and help towards it. Were the Christian Religion offered in all its Purity to *Mahometans*, the Gospel would soon take place of the *Alcoran* ; for 'tis well known, that *Mahomet's* Religion is nothing but a Composition of the Gospel, Law, and Heathenism, intermix'd with many Fables. They embrace indeed part of the main Truths, and go so far as to acknowledge *Christ* for the *Messiah* ; yet they will not believe he was crucified ; they affirm he was taken into Heaven ; and the more enlightned among them, do even prefer him to *Mahomet*. There was some who suffered under *Solyman*, for asserting, that *Mahomet* was but his Servant.

It were very easie to bring over to the Truth of Christian Religion, Persons who have so high Conceptions and Esteem for its Author. Were the Christians that are among them not Idolaters, were *Christ's* Doctrine presented to them in its Primitive Simplicity, and the Design of his Death clearly explained, the Scandal they take at it would soon cease, and it would not be so hard a matter to make them good Profelytes to the Truth : But while the Christian Religion appears in such an ugly Shape, as it does among those of the *Greek Church*, there is no likelihood to persuade them to it.

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'Tis farther objected, that since *Judaism* bears up its Head against so much Cruelty and Oppression, as it hath met with, we must not stand so much upon the Duration of the Gospel, and upon the Trial it bore, since this Example shews, that Obstinacy hath a greater share in the maintaining of a Religion than the Truth it self.

It is observable first, that God designing to abolish the Ceremonial Law hath actually abolished it; except the Circumcision given before *Moses*, and some other Purifications, all the rest is of no use at this Day: For God having confined the Observation of that Law to *Jerusalem*, and ordained for Priests only *Aaron's* Family, it appears he hath abolished the Essentials of it, and incapacitated the *Jews* for the practising of it, by turning them out of that place, erasing their Temple, and confounding their Genealogies.

Secondly, The *Jews* Religion was no Imposture, it was as well as the Gospel the great Work of God: *Jews* worship the same God with the Christians, observe the same Moral Law, and believe the same Resurrection, and the same Future State, tho' they are deficient in not embracing the Proofs *Christ* hath given of them: 'Tis no wonder then, God should leave some Remains of his Works among them, and permit them to continue under Afflictions, since their preservation serves as a Proof to the Christian Religion. Tho' they be the greatest Enemies of Christianity, they affirm God hath promised a *Messiah* out of the Family of *David*, who should call the Nations to the Knowledge of the true God; and they preserve very scrupulously the Prophecies of God concerning this great Redeemer, together with his several Characters; which are so evidently found in *Christ*, as to vindicate Christians in their acknowledgement of him.

Add to these Considerations, that *St. Paul* having foretold at the Eleventh Chapter to the *Romans*, the *Jews* coming over to the Gospel after all the rest of the Nations; their Preservation being far from lessening the Proof we draw from the Duration of the Gospel, gives us a favourable Opinion of it; and doubtless it will be one Day one of the greatest Proofs of its Truth, when the rest of this Prophecy shall come to pass.

'Tis then no wonder, that they have been preserved in the midst of so many Persecutions, since their Religion comes from God, as well as ours, with these two Differences, that their Ceremonies were but for a time, and only instituted for them; whereas the Christian Religion was made for all Men, and designed to continue to the World's end.

This is the Reason why it was neither given in so solemn and tremendous a manner to a single Nation as the Law was, nor established by force as *Mahomet's* Religion; God by degrees founded it upon undeniable Proofs, and fitted to Mens Understanding: The Authors of it have given their Lives for it, that the World seeing their Sufferings, and considering that they alone had the Strength and Honour to withstand them, should be convinced of the Divinity of the Gospel; since it bore up it self against the Means, which never use to fail in the destroying Falshood and Imposture.

C H A P. VIII.

More Objections answered.

AFTER all that hath been said, no Body will be so unreasonable, as to dispute the Death of *Christ*, and his Apostles, to maintain the Truth of the Gospel, under pretence there have been whole Sects which denied the Sufferings of our Saviour; and to say, that we have no Authentick Records of the Death of those generous Martyrs we speak so much of.

'Tis true indeed, we must own, there have been some Disciples of *Cerdo*, *Marcion*, *Valentinus*, and *Manes*, who being ignorant of the great Design of *Christ*'s Death, could not conceive how he should be crucified, without doing wrong to God's Wisdom and Goodness. They had rather conceive him without a real Body, than own he had lost his Life; and answered the Objections taken out of the Gospel, by asserting *Christ*'s Body which was seen, was but a Phantom, or empty Apparition, and that he was crucified only in appearance: We will suppose none would now maintain such a Chimera; it would but tire our Reader's Patience to answer such Trifles.

Mahomet takes contrary Measures to bring the Death of *Christ* into doubt, which are as fantastical; he is so bold as to maintain, that *Christ* was not crucified; and tells us, that *Judas* in his likeness was put to Death in his room, while *Christ* escapes, and is taken up into Heaven. We shall not wonder at this Impostor's Boldness, if we reflect on his Design to head a Party; therefore to attain his Ends, he sets up a Religion, which had nothing in it at the first sight that seemed unpleasant, or grievous to be born. He drew up a Body of Doctrines which did equally smile upon both *Jews* and *Christians*. But because *Judaism* prevailed in *Arabia*, he borrowed more from the Law, than from the Gospel; ordained Circumcision, and took away the Death of *Christ*, as the great Scandal to the *Jews*. He draws out of the Gospel nothing, but what might serve to *Christ*'s Honour; and asserts in his *Alcoran*, that he was the promised *Messiah*, and was taken up into Heaven; he denies he was crucified betwixt two Thieves; he thought however this Vacancy was to be filled up, and finding none more deserving of it than *Judas*, who betrayed his Master, he places him betwixt the *Cairifs*, to punish him for so foul a Crime.

Mahomet's rash Assertion is so far from injuring this Truth, as to shew on the contrary, that *Christ*'s Death is the Work of an Infinite Wisdom; for Man takes another Course than God hath done, when he designs to set up a Religion for his own Interest. *Mahomet* was more politick, than to lay the Foundation of his Doctrines upon a Death so infamous as that of the Cross; Humanity hath quite other Prospects, therefore this Impostor proposes nothing in his *Alcoran*, which might affright or scandalize the World: But on the contrary, he shews

the fairest side of Things, and leaves out of the Gospel whatsoever might seem uneasy or ungrateful to his Profelytes. Man's Intellect is too limited to penetrate as far as God's ; then he is sensible of his Weakness, when he is put upon it to extract Light out of Darkness, Glory out of Infamy, and Life out of Death, for these are things above his reach ; hence 'tis, that for want of diving into the Design of God, he condemns it, because he is not acquainted with it ; and what is more, he boldly ventures to challenge it with Folly : * *The natural Man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; that is, the purpose of God in Christ's Death : For they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

Mahomet had never dared to deny Christ's Death, it being so Authentick a Fact, had he been acquainted with all the Reasons of it ; for if God's Reasons in it were rightly understood, one should discover too many Marks of Divinity in it, to call it the least in question ; that Testimony born to the Truth was so heroic, as to deserve the highest admiration.

As to the Apostles, one cannot dispute their Martyrdoms. for the Gospel, under pretence there is no History that affords us Authentick Proofs of them.

'Tis the same thing to set up a ridiculous *Pyrrhonism*, as to call in question Facts written by contemporary Authors, transmitted to Posterity by a constant Tradition. Is there any thing more Authentick than St. Stephen's, and St. James's Martyrdom mentioned in the *Acts* ? Does any thing carry greater Authority with it, than the Persecutions of St. Paul, whom St. Luke, in the Close of his History, leaves a Prisoner for maintaining the Resurrection, by preaching that of Christ ? *Clemens*, in his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, together with other Authors, informs us, That the Apostles died Martyrs, with as full assurance and satisfaction as we can desire to have of any distant Transaction. No Body ever went about to doubt of it, but those who being pinch'd by the Reasons of their Adversaries, oppose meer Evasions to decline the strength of the Blow.

The last specious pretence that can be made, is, that they were justly punish'd as Innovators in Religion, and most dangerous People capable to perplex the State, and abolish the two most ancient Religions of the World. We readily grant this last to be their Design ; that is, the pulling down the Jewish and Heathenish Religions, the Event plainly shews it : But the Question returns, Whether it was of themselves, or of God ? If of God, the Objection falls of it self for this Reason, that we must rather obey God than Men, whatever Troubles we may be accidental Causes of.

If they say of themselves, there occur many Inconveniences, it will be their Business to make us understand, how Persons of so holy Life, and wise Doctrine, could be so rash as to lose their Reputation, and even Life it self, to aver things they never were Witnesses of.

They must take some Pains to reach us, how a Company of illiterate Fishermen, could resolve to leave their Families, and Employments, to go up and down the World, to preach up an Error, of which they were convinced that it was so.

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They must persuade us, that their Progress was not so strange, and that it was easie for them to accomplish their Designs, how chimerical and rash soever they were.

They must prove to us, How an Imposture, against which all the World is up in Arms, can subsist, notwithstanding its Authors, and their Proselytes, have been most cruelly put to Death ?

They must alledge a good Reason, Why false *Messiaes*, who for their time had more Followers than *Christ* himself, could have met with so little success ?

They must discover to us what was their intent, if they did not preach the Truth ? For let a Man be never so much deserted of his Reason, we must suppose him to have some Design if he loses his Life, rather than to forsake his Testimony.

They must answer all these Difficulties, to weaken the force of the Proof we draw, from the Death of the Apostles, to maintain *Christ's* Resurrection, and to dispute with Reason the Verity of the Gospel ; otherwise we shall surely think, they doubt of it only to satisfy the Vanity of being thought the Monopolisers of Wit.

Many Persons doubt, without ever reflecting on the Proofs of the Christian Religion, they think, that we have no other assurance of another Life than that, because it is revealed : They do not consider, that the Essence of Christianity, as to Matters of Faith, depends on the Proofs God hath given us of a future State ; 'tis upon the Testimony that our Saviour hath born to the Truth, and upon that the Apostles bore to his Resurrection, that our Faith is grounded ; it is not grounded then upon a bare Revelation, as the Deists pretend, but upon most certain Matters of Fact.

We have the best Assurances in the World, that God hath spoken to *Christ* ; the main Design of the Gospel is to prove this Truth, and the End of Revelation is to persuade us of it. Were we once convinced that *Christ* came from God, there would be no difficulty in all the rest ; the Idea we have of an Almighty God, easily dissolves all the Objections that can be made against the Resurrection.

C H A P. IX.

That the Gospel in the Greatness of its Promises, and in the Force of its Proofs, sets forth nothing, but what is most conformable to Reason, and most worthy of the most perfect Being.

IF a Man will take the least trouble to examine what is already said, he will find that *Christ*, and his Apostles are the only Authors we have consulted, since whatsoever we have said is grounded upon Texts of Scripture, and upon the Design of the Gospel. There is nothing here that is repugnant to Reason; God's Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, the Interest of which the Deists pretend to maintain, being far from receiving the least Injury, shine forth with all their Splendour.

We know we have not here to deal with Atheists, Persons unworthy of our Notice: But we dispute against those who acknowledge a most perfect Being, and who pretend to espouse the Cause of Reason; let them acquaint us wherein the Gospel in the manner it is here represented, is incompatible with any Perfections of the Supreme Being, and contrary to any Notion of common Sense?

The Gospel proposes nothing to us, but the Knowledge of God in the full extent of all his Perfections; the Wisdom of God's Conduct, his Infinite Goodness, the Excellency of his Laws, and the Greatness of his Promises, discovered to us in it, are as it were, so many Mirrors, wherein we may contemplate the Perfections of the Deity. The positive Assurance he gives us, that he will one Day justify his Providence and Dealings with us, affords us as high Conceptions of his Justice and Power, as could be expected.

If the Christian Religion cometh up to the Idea all rational Men have of God? It in the choice and force of the Proofs, the Gospel presents us with nothing, but what is most worthy his Wisdom, what Reason have they to doubt that this is his Work?

There is no Religion in the World, which affords Men more clear Ideas of God's Infinite Perfections, than the Christian: What could more evidently demonstrate his Greatness, than the Recompense the Gospel sets forth, the Means to assure us of it, and the Conditions required to obtain it? By Faith God will have us to rely on his Power, and trust in the Verity of his Promises, and by Holiness to transcribe his Pattern, that no impure thing may approach him.

Man lost himself, for calling in question, against all evident Reasons, the certain Threats of Death God made upon the eating of the forbidden Fruit; and God will have him to make Amends for his Incredulity, by believing a seeming impossibility: He first doubted God's Power of taking away his Life, and now he must believe, God will raise his dead and consumed Body at the last Day; thus he keeps up his Power and Glory together, with the rest of his Perfections.

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He acts here as a Supreme Being, yet he condescends to our weakness, like a most clement Father; since he forgets nothing to produce in us that Faith he requires, and presents us with whatever may make impression on us.

First, He takes *Adam* out of the Dust, that we should not doubt, that he who hath formed us out of Clay, can restore us again, when by Death we are relapsed and turned again into it. *Secondly*, Having threatened *Adam* to reduce him to his Primitive Dust, he promises a Redeemer to assure him, that he would one Day free him from that State. *Thirdly*, He translates holy Men to Heaven, as *Enoch* and *Elijah*, to shew this was the place he had set apart for the Reward of Vertue. *Fourthly*, He raises the Dead before ever the Resurrection was preached to the World, that he might induce Men to believe it more easily, when *Christ* should bring it to light. At last he sends the promised Redeemer to give us undoubted Proofs of it; *Christ* works Miracles, raises the Dead already corrupted, and gives by his Death the greatest proof of his Sincerity that could be given; God raised him, to shew in his own Person, the Truth sealed by his Blood, and sends the Witnesses of his Resurrection throughout all the World, to confirm by their Miracles, and loss of their Lives, their Testimony: Is it possible not to discern here the Finger of God, but to attribute to Men a Work which so well sustains it self, and comprehends so great Wisdom in it?

One may see by this little Essay, wherein *Christ's* Death is set forth with great Simplicity, that the Cross, which at first sight is a Scandal to some, and Folly to others, is the effect of a most Infinite Wisdom; we shall only need to consider its Reasons to be convinced of it.

There is nothing here, but we may reasonably agree to; God is not an unjust Master, to require of Men a blind Obedience: All that he hath done for our Salvation being grounded upon wise Reasons, and the greatest Perfections, he exposes it to the Judgment of all the World: He would have us believe with Reason; for if he reveals another Life, he backs his Revelation with Proofs, and will have us to examine them, that we may admire his most wise Conduct.

Men are afraid to bear the touch, when they have proposed some Tenets in Religion; they are very angry with those, who go about to discover their weak side; they require an implicate Faith: But God deals otherwise with us, his Actions and Words being grounded upon his Eternal Reason, there can proceed nothing from this Source, in the least to eclipse his Glory. Examination being far from discovering any Imperfection in Revelation, serves only to the manifesting of its Greatness and Excellency.

God knows, that the more clearly we see into a Design, the more we admire the Wisdom of the Author: For this reason *St. Paul* wished to the *Ephesians*, That the Eyes of their Understanding might be enlightened, that they might know the full extent of God's Wisdom in *Christ Jesus*. If a Man should propose to his Hearers Things beyond their Comprehension, he would, no doubt, put them to the Blush, and make them think meanly of themselves; but one should not at all admire his Wisdom, because not conceiving what he says, one could not be able to judge of it.

'Tis a common Maxim among those of the *Roman Church*, that to be faithful, or a good Christian, one must believe implicitly ; but to be a Philosopher, one must see clearly. They advance this Maxim to maintain the Work of Men, that of God needs not such assistance. I own, one must blindfold himself to be a Papist ; but God does not require we should put out our Eyes to be Christians : Nothing being in the Gospel, but what is most wise, he will have us to examine it, that we may give him Glory with Reason ; for were we forced to a blind Belief, our Belief would be without Reason, and we could never know God's Wisdom in this excellent Dispensation, and publish it upon good grounds.

The Gospel then hath nothing in it, but what is absolutely wise and reasonable : The Deists unhappily believe our Faith is only grounded on the Authority of him that speaks to us ; what we have said of the great Design of God in the Death of *Christ*, shews, that if we have given our Assent to it, 'tis not implicitly, but as Persons who have the full use of their Reason ; we verily believe, that this great Event contains nothing, but what is very consonant to Reason, and agreeing most perfectly with the Ideas we have of the greatest Goodness, Wisdom, and Power.

We demand of those that deny Revelation, and pretend withal to own a most perfect Being, How they can conceive that an infinite Goodness hath never communicated it self to intelligent Creatures, but by giving them their Beings ? Do they think, that it did not endeavour to procure them all the Happiness they were capable of enjoying ?

If they believe God to be infinitely holy, can they imagine he would not love Holiness in Men, and that he hath been wanting to inspire them with the strictest means for the attaining of it ?

If the Deists believe a most infinitely wise Being, can they suppose that God hath created Man only to exercise his Power ; and foreseeing them about to return to Dust, he had taken no care to restore and renew the most perfect of all his Works ?

If they acknowledge him to be just, how can they reconcile the Adversity of good Men, with the Prosperity of Bad, if he does not one Day rectifie all things, and render to every one according to his Works ?

Lastly, If they own him to be infinitely powerful, what difficulty can they pretend to find in the Resurrection ? The same God who hath framed us out of nothing, is he not able to raise us out of the Dust, and give our Bodies their primitive Figures ? If they believe him Omnipotent, they cannot deny Resurrection ; all the Question is, Whether God will raise us again ? And what Reason have we to doubt of this ? Since he hath sent *Christ* on purpose to acquaint us with his Will in this, and to give us such sufficient Proofs of it, as all the World might feel their force, and confess their excellency.

The C L O S E.

AT the beginning of this Tract, after having spoken of the Cause of the Unbelief of the Devils, and endeavoured to free 'em of the Mist which hinders them from seeing the Cross of *Christ* in its proper clearness, we have given just Ideas of it, and shewn, that it agrees with the main Design of God in the Gospel. God intending to convince Men's Unbelief by undeniable Proofs of another Life, found nothing fitter for it, than the Death of him that proceeded from him; he causes his own Son to expire upon the Cross, to maintain the Truth of what he said, to convince the World, that for the very Truth he underwent so grievous Sufferings: We have proved from places of Scripture, this was the chief Reason of his Death.

We shewed also, that God so ordered it, as to take occasion by raising his Son from the Dead, to give in him an ocular Proof of the Truth he died for. We have proved, That God's Design being to establish *Christ's* Resurrection; the great Proof of the Gospel, by the Blood of Martyrs, nothing could be more proper to encourage them to suffer for this Truth, than the Example of their Captain. We made it appear, that God yielded him up to Death, to make us good Men in prospect of a future Happiness confirmed by it.

Afterwards we endeavoured to give just Notions of his Death, considered as a Sacrifice, and to convince the Devils, that tho' God looked upon it as a Victim in our room, yet there was nothing in all this, that encourages Sin, or charges God with the least Imperfection.

In the Second Part we have weigh'd the most considerable Objections, and vindicated God's Wisdom in *Christ's* Death, by demonstrating the plain Marks it had of Divinity.

If the Cross of *Christ* was duly considered in the manner we presented it, both the Scandal taken at it, and the Folly it is charged with would soon be removed, and the Cross esteemed the Work of the sublimest Wisdom. They condemn things before they know them, they prejudice the Matter, and then proceed to pass Sentence on it, without taking the trouble at all to examine it.

After all that hath been said of God's great Design of *Christ's* Disinterestedness, which forced an Atheist to own it, a Witness not to be rejected on this occasion; if after all these things, they will not believe *Christ's* Death to be the Work of God, let them examine themselves, Whether the Depravation of their own Hearts, hath not raised these Difficulties against it, rather than their pretended Reason? They will not forsake their Doubts, because they cannot resolve to mortify their Affections; and they know very well, that Belief, without a good Life accompanying it, makes us the more guilty before God.

If one would seriously consider, that the Study of Religion, and the Search after the Sovereign Good, is a thing of the most absolute necessity, and worthiest of an honest Man, they would doubtless make it their chiefest Employment. If God from all Eternity hath always been contriving to make us happy, 'tis very reasonable we should bestow some few Hours in meditating of it. The greatest Business of Life is here concerned, together with all the Interest of Men; if we lose the Opportunity in this World, we shall never find it in another; for here is the place, in which we can only perform what God requires of us towards our Happiness; if out of Unbelief and Impenitency we abuse the Means of Grace, we shall be deprived of all his Promises, and experience the Rigour of his severest Threatnings.

These Considerations ought to make deep impression upon any rational Man, and make him duly consider, that he cannot take too much care for a thing of so great importance. God hath done for our Salvation, whatever could be expected of his Wisdom and Goodness; Man must take some pains in it, and examine the Revelation from its Source, the Scripture; he must endeavour to distinguish the Voice of God from that of Men, and take care to acquire to himself a true and solid Judgment, with a sincere and honest Heart; on our Choice and Management, depends our Eternal Happiness or Misery: If Christian Religion then only shews us the Way to Salvation, and the sure Means to obtain it, it ought to be the very first Subject of our Meditation and Care. The manner after which we have described it, ought to engage Men to its study, since we have only offered such Proofs, whose Wisdom and Evidence may be easily known by Examination.

It is my hearty Prayer, that they, who till now, have stood out against this Great Truth, revealed after so wonderful a manner, may be so convinced of it, that their Conviction may turn to God's Glory, and to their own everlasting Salvation. *Amen.*

F I N I S.

